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The English and Classical Substance of Babits's Novels

Andrea Denby, Ph.D. thesis

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Abstract

The English and Classical Substance of Babits's Novels

This thesis investigates Mihály Babits's increasingly original utilisation of English and classical literature in his five novels. It also interprets the relevance of its findings.

Intertextuality originating in English works is traceable in Babits's first novel, *A gólyakalifa* (1916) and in his second novel, *Kártyavár* (1915-1923). Babits's *A gólyakalifa* has roots in Virgil's *Eclogues*, Coleridge's and Wordsworth's verse. It imitates Edgar Allan Poe's, Robert Louis Stevenson's and Oscar Wilde's doppelgänger fiction. The sources of intertextuality in *Kártyavár* are Virgil's *Aeneid* and Charles Dickens's *Hard Times* and *Bleak House*. Carlyle's, Macaulay's and J. S. Mill's ideas form a basis of *Kártyavár*'s philosophy. Babits drew on Dickens in the way he created his characters in *Kártyavár*. Babits's third novel, *Timár Virgil fia* (1919-1922) incorporates certain themes of Shakespeare's plays as well. It is a hypertext of *The Aeneid*, and transposes themes and moods from Keats's, Wordsworth's and Tennyson's verse. It has many intertexts such as quotations from Virgil and St. Augustine. Babits's fourth novel, *Halálfiái* (1927) and his last novel, *Elza pilóta* (1918-1933) are more original hypertexts of their exemplars. *Halálfiái* has roots in George Eliot's and George Meredith's novels. It has intertextual episodes which are adaptations of Meredith's *The Egoist*. *Halálfiái* is also an architectural hypertext of particular works by Fielding, Smollett, and Goldsmith. *Elza pilóta* (1933) reads as a metatext of some of its sources, such as Thomas More's *Utopia* and Bacon's *New Atlantis*, but is principally an ingenious hypertext of Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, Poe's as well as H. G. Wells's works. It creates its own innovative narrative and story.

Contents

Introduction: Mihály Babits's family background and education	8
 <i>A gólyakalifa</i> CHAPTER 1	 25
1.1 Contents	25
1.2 An introduction to the secondary literature of <i>A gólyakalifa</i>	26
1.3 The flight of the ego in <i>A gólyakalifa</i> and Poe's <i>William Wilson</i>	27
1.4 Babits's reconstruction of R. L. Stevenson's <i>Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde</i>	36
1.4.1 The supremacy of the respectable self	37
1.4.2 The alter ego	38
1.4.3 The alter ego's conquest over the main self	39
1. 5 A diversion	42
1.5.1 <i>A gólyakalifa</i>'s roots in Coleridge	42
1.6 A further analysis of the roots and a parallel of Babits's novel	45
1.6.1 Morton Prince's and Dickens's role in the creation of <i>A gólyakalifa</i>	45
1.6.2 Ruskin and Proust	51
1.6.3 Dickens and Morton Prince	53
1.6.4 Morton Prince	55
1.6.5 <i>The Picture of Dorian Gray</i>	57
1.6.6 Virgil, Poe and Wilde: Conclusion	61

<i>Kártyavár</i> CHAPTER 2	67
2.1 Contents	67
2.2 A brief introduction into the secondary literature on the novel	68
2.3 Main features of <i>Kártyavár</i> and their genetic roots in Dickens	71
2.3.1 Narration	71
2.3.2 Narrative style and subtexts	71
2.3.3 Characters	73
2.3.4 Descriptions of themes	76
2.3.5 Genre	78
2.4 A close analysis of the text	80
2.4.1 Babits's transposition of the beginning of <i>Bleak House</i> in <i>Kártyavár</i>	80
2.4.2 <i>Kártyavár's</i> story and its circumstances	83
2.5 Heroism and predestination - history and place	106
2.6 The closing of <i>Kártyavár</i>	110
2.7 Conclusion	114

<i>Timár Virgil fia</i> (1919-1922) CHAPTER 3	116
3.1 Contents	116
3.2 Introduction to <i>Timár Virgil fia</i>	117
3.3 Babits's concept of Virgil as a classic and its parallel with T.S. Eliot	119
3.4 Virgil in Hungarian literary history	122
3.5 The classical and English origins of Babits's Virgilianism	129
3.6 The themes and compositional features of <i>Timár Virgil fia</i>	131
3.7 Virgilian and English sources of melancholy in Babits's novel	138
3.7.1 Sources of melancholy in <i>The Aeneid</i> and in <i>Timár Virgil fia</i>	138
3.7.2 Other classical and English sources of melancholy in Babits's novel	140
3.8 Virgil and Shakespeare in <i>Timár Virgil fia</i>	146
3.9 An interpretation of the novel on the basis of its Virgilian leitmotif	151
3.10 Conclusion	157

***Halálfiái* | CHAPTER 4**

4.1 Contents	158
4.2 An overview of Hungarian secondary literature on the novel	159
4.3 Society as portrayed in <i>Halálfiái</i>	171
4.4 The classical, European and English qualities of <i>Halálfiái</i>	175
4.4.1 Don Quixote	177
4.4.2 Concrete English References	181
4.4.3 Gothic crime story	187
4.4.4 Features of the Eighteenth-century English Novel of Adventure	188
4.4.5 Meredith	190
4.5 <i>Halálfiái</i>'s story-line and its English sources	195
4.6 Conclusion	209

<i>Elza pilóta</i> CHAPTER 5	212
5.1 Contents	212
5.2 A summary of secondary literature	213
5.3 The story-line of <i>Elza pilóta</i>	219
5.4 The main English sources of <i>Elza pilóta</i>	229
5.4.1 Thomas More's <i>Utopia</i> (1518)	233
5.4.2 Francis Bacon's <i>New Atlantis</i> (1627)	236
5.4.3 Jonathan Swift, <i>Gulliver's Travels</i> (1726)	239
5.4.4 Samuel Butler's <i>Erewhon</i>	243
5.4.5 Edgar Allan Poe	245
5.4.6 Herbert George Wells	251
5.4.6.1 Novels of behaviour	252
5.4.6.2 Novels of conflict and civilisation	258
5.4.6.3 A Modern romance	261
5.5 Conclusion	262
 Conclusion of the thesis	 264
 Bibliography	 269
General reference tools	269
Primary sources	272
Secondary sources	285

INTRODUCTION: Babits's family background and education¹

Babits was born 26 November 1883 in Szekszárd. His father, Mihály Babits, was a judge in this town. He was appointed judge in Budapest in 1888 and continued his career in Pécs after the decentralisation of the crown court in 1891. He was a liberal: this was manifested in his sympathy with Zola in the Dreyfus case. His character and the Dreyfus affair were both raw material for Babits in his *Halálfiái*. Babits's grandfather was a Chief Constable. He had a hospitable nature and squandered most of the family fortune. Babits's great-grandfather, also Mihály Babits, was a physician who founded the General Hospital in Babits's native town.² He moved from Somogy³ to Tolna and thus transplanted the family's coat of arms from the previous to the latter county. Latin was a language for communication in the home of Babits's forebears. Babits's great-grandfather, Mihály Babits, spoke Latin to Babits's grandfather and Babits's father taught his son Latin before Babits went to school. Babits inherited his great-grandfather's, grandfather's and father's medical and law books. He remained committed to his Latinate inheritance. His oeuvre has a strong Latin vein.

Babits's mother, Hajnalka Kelemen, was an aristocrat whose male relations

¹I base my brief resume of Babits's background on the following sources: István Gál, 'Babits Mihály önéletrajza gyermek—és ifjúkor éveiről—Szabó Lőrincz lejegyzésében—', *Jelenkor*, 11 (1973), 1017-18. Among other autobiographical documents Lőrincz Szabó's record can be found in *Babits Mihály 'Itt a halk és komoly beszéd ideje'*, ed. János Téglás (Celldömölk: Pauz and Westermann, 1977). See also György Belia, *Babits tanulóiévei* (Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1983); *A Babits család levelezése*, ed. Attila Buda (Budapest: Universitas, 1996) and László Csányi, *Babits átváltozásai* (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1990).

²Szekszárd is a town in Tolna. Tolna is to the east of Somogy county bordering on the Danube in the south-west of Hungary in Transdanubia.

³Somogy is a county on the southern bank of Lake Balaton in the south-west of present-day Hungary.

were civil servants and priests. Babits's maternal grandfather, József Kelemen, was a judge in Szekszárd like his father. Morals, faith and justice are prominent themes in Babits's prose. Hajnalka's father wanted his daughter to be called Aurora. The priest was unwilling to use this name. This is the reason she was named 'Hajnalka'; the Hungarian calque of Aurora. Babits's maternal grandmother, Innocencia Rácz Hidvégi inspired Cenci's character in *Halálfiái*. Babits's maternal great-grandfather, Mihály Kelemen was a lieutenant in the medical corps during the 1848-49 War of Independence. He collected Hungarian verse and fiction. Babits inherited some of his books. Babits based Döme's character on Mihály Kelemen in *Halálfiái*.⁴ Babits's mother had two uncles whom Babits often mentioned in his works. One was a Roman Catholic bishop, József Kelemen, the other a canon of the cathedral chapter in Pécs, László Kelemen. The canon had a large Latin and Italian library. Babits often visited him in Pécs when he was a student.

While Babits's maternal grandmother was a strong woman, her daughter was frail. She was often ill and suffered from migraine. Nevertheless she lived up to the age of 91. She was a lover of literature and knew Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin*, János Arany's *Toldi szerelme*, *The Love of Toldi* and László Arany's *Déliabók hőse*, *The Hero of Mirages* by heart. She inculcated a love of poetry into Babits and inspired Babits to read in French since she read French fluently.⁵

There is hardly any description of the relationship of Babits's parents. His

⁴The characters recorded by Babits in his notes show that Babits originally planned to link the history of his family and the literary characters of his novel more closely and in a much more structured way. According to these notes he named a character Aurora, after his mother; another Valéria Geiger Dienes, after a second cousin. He might have planned to put into two novels Ákos, his uncle and the son of Cenci, Mrs Innocencia Rácz József Kelemen who died when young and Cenci's nephew, Imre Újfalussy, who died from pneumonia at an early age. See Lajos Sipos, 'Adatok a *Halálfiái* geneziséhez', *Literatura*, 1 (1979), 54-72.

⁵György Belia, *Babits tanulói* (1983), p. 42.

father was strict with himself and everyone around him, especially his closest family circle. He took his work seriously and was preoccupied with the theoretical problems of his profession even in his free time. The judge in *Halálfiái* provides a simulacrum of his character. Babits's mother had a lonely existence within the family and she lost several children. The family had to appear perfect from the outside which must have contributed to her quiet isolation, her love of poetry and melancholic illness. His parents' relationship which thus lived up to what was expected from them, must have contributed to Babits's repressive nature. To quote him: "Anyám magányos óráiban vagy gyermekei közt, ének helyett, sokszor szavalgatta a *Szép Ilonka*-t, *Beautiful Ilonka* és 'A merengőhöz', 'To the Brooder' címzett ódát. Ezeknek rímei legrégibb emlékezetemből csengenek vissza, bár értelmüktől kissé függetlenül".⁶

In addition to Latin, Hungarian and French, English literature was also part of the Babits family library. Babits's father possessed the complete works of Shakespeare on his bookshelves and Babits remembers him writing historical narratives in the manner of Walter Scott.⁷ The judge did this as a break from his professional preoccupations which is evidence of his lonely and pensive character. Shakespeare became a lifelong fascination for Babits. He quotes Shakespeare's works in his essays, verse and fiction. His mother was a keen reader of English novels, most likely in Hungarian translation. Babits wrote of his childhood:

'egészen olyan ez, mint egy régi regény azokból a szép hosszú, angol regényekből, amiket anyám olvasott ezidőben, a végérhetetlen téli estéken. Később én is olvastam

⁶"In her lonely hours, my mother often recited Mihály Vörösmarty's *Szép Ilonka* and 'A merengőhöz' ode instead of singing amongst her children. I can recall these rhymes from my earliest memories, although without being able to make sense of them', *ibid.*, p. 42.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 19.

ezeket a regényeket, böngészve a könyvespolcon'.⁸ We have little information concerning the identity of these novels. According to Babits's *Az európai irodalom története* the English-language⁹ works of James Fenimore Cooper, Daniel Defoe, Charles Dickens, George Eliot, Robert Louis Stevenson and Jonathan Swift were among them.¹⁰

While at grammar school one of Babits's favourite books was Thackeray's *The History of Henry Esmond* which he read (in Hungarian translation) several times.¹¹ In 1905 Babits was still preoccupied with Thackeray: 'most olvastam Pascal Penseesit (megjegyzem: nem térített meg senki) s regényeket; Sur la pierre «B»blancheot Pendennist, Niels Lyhnét még egyszer; pedig mást kéne olvasnom,—'¹² It is worth bearing in mind that Thackeray is one English root of Babits's fiction.

While a student at the University of Budapest, Babits taught himself English, French and German by reading works in these languages and translating from these into Hungarian. He attended László Négyesy's seminars¹³ which in 1903-04 became a workshop for young poets and translators who wanted to translate and reinvigorate

⁸'it was exactly like one of those beautiful old English novels my mother used to read then in the infinitely long winter nights Later on, browsing through the book-shelves, I took to reading these novels as well', Mihály Babits, *Keresztül kasul az életemen* (Budapest: Kairosz, 1997), p. 11.

⁹English refers to the language here.

¹⁰István Gál, *Babits és az angol irodalom* (Debrecen: A Tisza István-Tudományegyetem angol szemináriuma, 1942), pp. 12-3.

¹¹*Babits Mihály 'Itt a halk és komoly beszéd ideje'* (1977), p. 34.

¹²'I have just been reading Pascal's *Pensées* (I must add that no one has converted me so far) and novels such as *Sur la Pierre blanche*, Thackeray's *The History of Pendennis* and Niels Lyhne again despite the fact that I ought to be reading something else', *Babits Mihály levelezése* (1998), p. 178. *Anatole France, Sur la Pierre Blanche* (1905) is a utopia. Marie Louise Berneri, *Journey through Utopia* (London: Freedom, 1982) calls it France's most boring work. See *ibid.*, p. 293.

¹³László Négyesy (1861-1933) was a lecturer at ELTE Budapest. His Hungarian style and translation classes were a literary club where the participants read out and discussed their translations and their own works. Négyesy's seminars were popular and attended by critics poets and writers of the young generation. The most well known members of the seminar were Mihály Babits, Dezső Kosztolányi, Gyula Juhász, Béla Zalai, Árpád Tóth, Géza Csáth, Jenő Mohácsi, Béla Endrődi, Frigyes Karinthy and Gábor Oláh. For more information see *A magyar irodalom története 1905-től 1919-ig*, ed. Miklós Szabolcsi (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1965), p. 31, 357; *Babits Mihály levelezése* (1998); Dezső Kosztolányi, *Levelek-Naplók* (Budapest: Osiris, 1996).

their art with the help of West European examples.¹⁴ The following declaration by

Babits shows the intentional nature of his English cultural orientation and his reasons:

Megdöbbenve ébredtem rá a magyar középosztály, az egész akkori magyar kultúra elmaradottságára. Ez a kor az egész magyar szellemi életnek nagy apálya volt. A magyar élet benn ült a látszólagos biztosban, s visszaesett a régi magyar apátiába. Arany János halála óta fajunk zsenije is kihaltak látszott. Egy kis csapatunk verődött össze az egyetemen, melyből azóta az új magyar irodalom kitűnőségei nőttek ki. Kosztolányi, Juhász Gyula és mások. Ez a csapat a fiatalság egészséges és szuverén megvetésével nézett a századvég epigon, népieskedő s jelentéktelen kedvességeket hajszoló irodalmára.—Vörösmarty-ig tért vissza ízlésével, vagy a külföldre nézett, nyugat felé, lehetőleg túl a németen, Párizsba, Albionba!...¹⁵

György Rába analyses the translations of Babits, Árpád Tóth and Kosztolányi on the basis of manuscript material in *Szép hűtlenek, The Beautifully Unfaithful*. In this book he presents Babits's translations from English before he started to attend Négyesy's classes.¹⁶ Rába explains that although Babits had read English before 1903, he only started to read in this language regularly after this date. This is because he had his most difficult exams during this year.¹⁷ As a student he read John Locke¹⁸, David Hume¹⁹, Poe and William James.²⁰ Babits's preoccupation with the interpretation of sensual experience and perception is a subject of his first novel: *A gólyakalifa*. He

¹⁴György Belia, *Babits Mihály tanulóiévei* (1983), pp. 180–82.

¹⁵'I was shocked when I grasped the anachronistic quality of the Hungarian middle class, and the backwardness of the whole Hungarian culture. This was a period of recession in Hungarian culture. Hungarian life was resting in an illusion of security, and had relapsed into a state of ancient Hungarian apathy. Since the death of János Arany the spirit of the race seems extinct. A small group gathered at the University, out of which grew the leading literary figures of this age, for example, Dezső Kosztolányi and Gyula Juhász. This group of young men looked upon the eclectic, folk and trivial-minded literature of the fin de siècle with youthful contempt. In their taste they either went back to Vörösmarty, or they looked to foreign lands, further than the German towards the West, to Paris and Albion', *Babits Mihály 'Itt a halk és komoly beszéd ideje'* (1997), p. 117.

¹⁶Babits's manuscript: *On the Eve of St. Agnes* is dated from the beginning of 1902. See György Rába, *Szép hűtlenek* (A Magyar Tudományos Akadémia Irodalomtudományi Intézete, 1969), p. 52.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Babits refers to Locke in his unfinished doctoral dissertation: 'Since Locke we sensualists hardly believe in such things', See 'Arany mint arisztokrata', *Esszék és tanulmányok*, ed. György Belia, 2 vols. (Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1978), i, pp. 788–807.

¹⁹He trusted in sensual experience and thus sensualists such as Locke and Hume attracted him mostly', See György Rába, *Babits Mihály költészete* (Budapest: Akadémia, 1981), p. 12. See also p. 67.

²⁰Babits had William James, *The Principle of Psychology* (London, 1890) and *The Pluralistic Universe* in his library. See more on the manifestation of James's philosophy in Babits's oeuvre in György Rába, *Babits Mihály költészete* (1981), pp. 54–61.

also read Carlyle, Emerson²¹ and John Stuart Mill with great enthusiasm. Rába does not mention any particular work by Locke and Hume. Babits does not list any writing by them in his autobiographical records either. Nevertheless one can gather with certainty that Babits was preoccupied with Locke's 'Essay Concerning Human Understanding' (1690)²² and Hume's 'Inquiries Concerning Human Understanding' (1748).²³ Apart from *A gólyakalifa* Babits's early verse proves his preoccupation with the ideas of these philosophers. Babits tests the bounds of human perception and experience in 'Himnusz Iriszhez'²⁴, 'Hymn to Iris'. He aims at verbalising definite and indeterminate ways of perception in 'A gyémántsóró asszony'²⁵, 'The Woman that Scatters Diamonds'; 'Detektívhistória'²⁶, 'A Detective Story'; 'Márciusi reggelen'²⁷, 'On a Morning in March'; and 'Sunt Lacrimae Rerum'²⁸. The preoccupations of Hume's *Inquiries* concerning sentiment, taste, morals and justice can be found in 'Micsoda föstmény'²⁹, 'What a Miser'; 'A mandarin réme'³⁰, 'The Spectre of the Mandarin'; 'A lélek ünnepe', 'The Festival of the Soul',³¹ 'A magyarok istene'³², 'The God of the Hungarians'; and 'Politika'³³, 'Politics'; in *Az istenek halnak, az ember él* (1929), *The Gods are Dying, Mankind is Alive*. The ideas and observations which

²¹Babits had a 1907 edition of Thomas Carlyle, *Heroes and Hero-worship* and a 1903 edition of Emerson, *Representative Men* in his library. See also Rába's *Babits Mihály költészete* (1981), p. 37.

²²Babits had John Locke, *The Philosophical Works*, ed. J. A. St. John (London, 1843) in his library.

²³John Stuart Mill, *Analysis of the Phenomena of the Human Mind* (1829) was in Babits's field of interest. He also had *On Liberty and the Subjection Women* (Leipzig, 1917) in his library. Babits writes in 1905, 'Egyébként Göthét, Schopenhauert, Humeot, Tacitust, Byront olvasom felváltva', 'I am reading Goethe, Schopenhauer, Hume, Tacitus and Byron by turns', *Babits Mihály levelezése 1890-1906* (1998), p. 169.

²⁴*Babits Mihály összegyűjtött versei*, ed. Ágnes Kelevéz (Budapest: Osiris, 1997), pp. 9-10.

²⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 287-88.

²⁶*Ibid.*, p. 239.

²⁷*Ibid.*, p. 488.

²⁸*Ibid.*, p. 16.

²⁹*Ibid.*, p. 350.

³⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 350-51.

³¹*Ibid.*, p. 353.

³²*Ibid.*, pp. 353-54.

³³*Ibid.*, pp. 354-56.

have their roots in Hume, Locke and William James are often inseparable and intertwined in Babits's verse. Babits also read *The American Journal of Psychology*³⁴ and even wrote an essay on it.³⁵ This shows his preoccupation with psychology.

Carlyle was the first prose writer whom Babits read in the original.³⁶ In his letter from 1904 Babits writes to Kosztolányi: 'szívesen küldeném, de ezt tényleg csak két hétre, mert még csak egy részét olvastam, most azonban Shakespeare kedvéért félretettem): Carlyle Sartor Resartusát, amit érdemes elolvasnia'.³⁷ In another letter Babits asks Kosztolányi to return his copy of *Sartor Resartus* because he wants to finish reading it.³⁸ According to another letter from the same year, Babits was enthusiastically reading Carlyle's *Schiller's Life*.³⁹ Themes from these works of Carlyle are traceable in *Kártyavár*.

Babits and Kosztolányi discuss their readings in their correspondence. In his letters to Kosztolányi, Babits mentions not only the works of Thackeray, Carlyle and Emerson, but also Poe and Herbert Spencer.⁴⁰ Babits writes about Poe and Coleridge (*The Ancient Mariner*, *Christabel*) with enthusiasm and that he is in the process of translating works by Tennyson and Browning. In his essay 'L'art pour l'art' Babits quotes from Tennyson's 'The Palace of Art'.⁴¹ Babits's verse reminds Kosztolányi of works by Poe, Mark Twain, Burns and Dickens. Babits writes to Kosztolányi about

³⁴Babits Mihály levelezése 1890-1906 (1998), p. 167.

³⁵See Babits Mihály Esszék és Tanulmányok (1978), i, pp. 17-19.

³⁶Babits Mihály 'Itt a halk és komoly beszéd ideje' (1997), p. 35.

³⁷'I will gladly send you Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* for strictly two weeks. I have read a part of it and put it aside in favour of Shakespeare. It is worth reading', Babits Mihály levelezése 1890-1906 (1998), p. 78.

³⁸Ibid., p. 112.

³⁹Ibid., p. 54.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 72, 76.

⁴¹See György Belia, Babits Mihály tanulmányai (Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1983), pp. 170, 267.

Dorian Gray.⁴² The fact that all these readings left a deep imprint on Babits's creative mind can be seen in his novels.

Babits states that Petronius, Browning, Tennyson and Swinburne had made a deep impression on him, 'a két utóbbi azt hiszem, költészetemre is erős hatással volt'.⁴³ He wrote this during his sojourns in Baja and Szeged where he taught Latin and some Hungarian literature from 1905 to 1908.⁴⁴ The following letter from 1st September 1905 attests to Babits's deep enthusiasm:

Fogok küldeni néhány modern angol költőnek műveiből való szemelvényeket is, melyeket egyenesen Önnek fordítottam. Swinburne (a Baudelaire-utánczó) Browning (der Dunkele), Wordsworth, remek szonettjeim vannak tőle—Poe, Tennyson (on revient toujours...) és Whitman. [...] S ugyanezen költőkről kis tanulmányokat is írtam, melyeket szívesen elküldök.⁴⁵

In Szeged Babits inherited the library of one of his colleagues, Pál Hegedűs. This library contained many English books. Babits was impressed by Hegedűs's personality, and believed that it was to a great extent the product of the literature he had read. Babits considered Hegedűs a manifestation of the truth of the saying: 'Reading maketh a full man, conference a ready man, and writing an exact man'.⁴⁶ Babits also considered Hegedűs a pragmatic rather than artistic type, with an English moral sense and view of life. By his English sense of morality and view of life, Babits

⁴²*Babits Juhász és Kosztolányi levelezése*, ed. György Belia (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1959), pp. 41, 49, 59, 79, 82, 96, 104, 123, 124, 161, 175.

⁴³'the latter two of whom I think also influenced my verse', *Babits Mihály 'Itt a halk és komoly beszéd ideje'* (1997), p. 35.

⁴⁴See *A Ciszterci Rend Bajai Katolikus Főgimnáziumának értesítője az 1905-1906 iskolai évről* (Baja, 1906); *A Szegedi Magyar Királyi Állami Főreáliskola értesítője az 1906-07 iskolai évre* (Szeged, 1907); *A Szegedi Magyar Királyi Állami Főreáliskola értesítője az 1907-08 iskolai évre* (Szeged, 1908).

⁴⁵'I shall send you some extracts from the works of modern English poets which I have translated directly for you. These include Swinburne (an imitator of Baudelaire), Browning (*der Dunkele*), Wordsworth from whom I have some excellent sonnets—Poe and Tennyson (*on revient toujours...*) and the American Whitman. [...] I have also written some studies on these poets which I will be glad to send you', *Babits Mihály levelezése 1890-1906* (1998), pp. 168-69.

⁴⁶Francis Bacon, 'Of Studies' (1625), in *Francis Bacon The Major Works*, ed. Brian Vickers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 439.

meant an impeccable intellectual and existential independence that was characteristic of Hegedűs. It is worth recalling György Poszler's summary of what he saw as being English in Babits's approach:

Az aktuális lehetőséget vizsgálja. Az osztrák katolicizmusban rejlő ellenálló erőt. A másodikat, mert a humanitás és individuum elve. Lényegében rejlik minden jogtiprás és erőszak tagadása. Magatartás és szemlélet, amelyben a személyes szabadság gyakorlata nyugodott. Márpedig az egész világképének egyik sarkcsillaga; Angliában látja a letéteményest.⁴⁷

One of Hegedűs's favourite authors was Macaulay. One of his favourite pieces by Macaulay was his study on Bacon. The first reference we find to Macaulay in Babits's own works is in 'Shakespeare egyénisége'.⁴⁸ Another is that Babits compares the critic, Pál Gyulai's⁴⁹ style to that of Macaulay in his essay 'Petőfi és Arany' (1910). Even if Babits knew Macaulay's works before he became acquainted with Hegedűs, their meeting must have focused his interest on the moralist side of the English author even more strongly. Babits chose Macaulay's preoccupation with the individual's role in history⁵⁰ as one of his main themes in his second novel, *Kártyavár*.

Babits writes that Shelley and Keats were the main poets he read during his

⁴⁷'Babits assessed the chances of up to date pragmatic action, and the power of resistance Austrian Catholicism possessed. He selected the latter because of its principal humanity and individuality. It comprised resistance to all forms of violence and infringement of the law. It was a view of life and a code of conduct on which the practice of the individual's freedom was based. This was the keystone of Babits's world-view. Babits looked upon England as its trustee', György Poszler, *Eszmék és Nosztalgia* (Budapest: Magvető, 1989), p. 271.

⁴⁸'Shakespeare egyénisége' (1909), *Babits Mihály Esszék és tanulmányok* (1978), i, p. 65.

⁴⁹Pál Gyulai (b. 1826-d. 1909) was an independent critic who wrote poetry and one novel, *Egy régi udvarház utolsó gazdája* (1857). His best known critical works are *Petőfi Sándor* (1854), *A francia klasszicista drámáról* (1867), *Vörösmarty élete* (1866), *Eötvös József* (1872), *Toldy Ferenc* (1876), *Kemény Zsigmond* (1879) and *Arany János* (1833). He became president of the Kisfaludy Society in 1879 and resigned in 1899. He was Professor of Hungarian literature in Budapest from 1875 until his resignation in 1902. He was an editor of *Budapesti Szemle* from 1873 up to his death. See *A magyar irodalom története*, ed. István Sőtér, 6 vols. (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1964-66), iv: *A magyar irodalom története 1849-1905* (1965), pp. 197-222.

⁵⁰Thomas Babington Macaulay, *The Complete Works of Lord Macaulay*, ed. n. n., 12 vols. (London: Longmans; Green, 1898), i-vi: *History of England* (1898).

stay in Fogaras.⁵¹ Babits was also familiar with the Pre-Raphaelite and Arts and Crafts movements. He was in receipt of the *Studio* magazine 1909-1910.⁵² Babits's visually elaborate, sensualist and oriental motifs manifest his utilisation of the works of Edward Coley Burne Jones, Dante Gabriel Rossetti and William Morris. Antal Szerb explains the Pre-Raphaelite features of 'Klasszikus álmok', 'Classical Dreams'; *Laodamia, Laodameia*; 'Danaidák', 'Danaides'; and 'Két nővér', 'Two Sisters'.⁵³ Szerb principally emphasises the erotic and oneiric quality that these verses share with Pre-Raphaelite paintings. 'O lyric love'; 'Örök dolgok közé legyen híred beszótt', 'Let Your Name be Woven in Among Eternal Things'; 'Belovéd, ó belovéd', 'Szonettek', 'Sonnets' and 'A sorshoz', 'To Destiny' all take themes and motifs from these painters and especially from Dante Gabriel Rossetti. It is worth noting how Szerb saw Babits's relationship with English literature:

Irodalmi hatás nincsen bizonyos belső analógia nélkül; hiszen a hatás legszebb esete az, amikor az egyik költő a másikat ráeszmélteti eddig öntudatlanul rejlő képességeire, érzéseire, ritmusaira, [...] Ez a viszony Babits és az angolok között is. A belső rokonság elsősorban költészetük intellektuális voltában áll.⁵⁴

The interior of Babits's home in Esztergom⁵⁵ is most like a Hungarian folk variation of William Morris's and Philip Webb's interiors. The furniture resembles the type designed and decorated by Edward Burne Jones. The depiction of the interior in *Halálfiái* also evokes this type of milieu.

What I have outlined so far constitutes the only available first-hand data on

⁵¹Babits Mihály 'Itt a halk és komoly beszéd ideje' (1997), p. 35.

⁵²György Belia, *Szép hűtlenek* (1969), pp. 86-87.

⁵³Antal Szerb, 'Az intellektuális költő', in *Babits Mihály száz esztendeje: kritikák és portrék*, ed. Lajos Pók (Budapest: Gondolat, 1983), pp. 145-47.

⁵⁴'Inner analogy is essential towards literary influence. The most beautiful case of influence is when one poet makes the other realise their so far unrealised abilities, feeling and rhythm, [...] This is the relationship between Babits and the English. The inner relatedness consists primarily of the intellectual quality of their verse', *ibid.*, pp. 143-44.

⁵⁵See pictures of Babits's home and pieces of furniture in *Mint különös hírmondó.*, ed. Ágnes Kelevéz (Budapest: Petőfi Irodalmi Múzeum and Népművelési Propaganda Iroda, 1983), p. 348, 359, 390, 396.

Babits's roots in English literature and culture.

As I have already indicated, all Babits's novels have roots in English texts.

Turning towards English literature was partly the result of his inner relatedness with the attitudes of his English favourites and partly his pursuit of a programme. The reason for my choice of subject matter is the lack of thought and literature on this subject. Literature on Babits's prose is especially scarce.

In my exploration of English and Anglo-classical genetic contacts of the Babits oeuvre, I include mainly Virgil and classical Greek authors. The reason for this is not only their own relevance but also the background of Babits's English roots. A classics-based and often Virgilian approach was typical of many of Babits's favourite English poets and writers: Keats, Wordsworth, Tennyson, Thackeray. Their English works are often hypertexts⁵⁶ of their classical predecessors and their English oeuvre became hypotexts for Babits, both through their common classical sources and independently of them.

Explicit architextuality which is based on English models is easy to trace in Babits's first novel: *A gólyakalifa* (1916).⁵⁷ Babits's second novel: *Kártyavár* (1915-1923) shows explicit intertextual relations with English works. *Timár Virgil fia* (1919-1922) transforms its English roots in a highly complex manner and is

⁵⁶By hypertextuality I mean any relationship uniting a text B (which I shall call the *hypertext*) to an earlier text A (I shall of course, call it the *hypotext*) [...] *hyper-* and the *meta-*: i.e. a text derived from another pre-existent text. This derivation can be of a distinctive or intellectual kind, where a metatext (for example a given page from Aristotle's *Poetics*) "speaks" about a second text (*Oedipus Rex*). It may yet be of another kind such as text B not speaking of text A at all but being unable to exist, as such, without A, from which it originates through a process I shall provisionally call *transformation*, and which it consequently evokes more or less perceptibly without necessarily speaking of it or citing it', Genette, *Palimpsests* (1997), p. 5.

⁵⁷'the notion of imitating generic models rather than specific hypotexts', Graham Allen, *Intertextuality* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005). 'By architextuality I mean the entire set of general or transcendent categories—types of discourse, modes of enunciation, literary genres—from which emerges each singular text', Genette, *Palimpsests* (1997), p. 1.

explicitly intertextual⁵⁸ with its Latin roots. It is full of quotations from its Latin sources. Babits transformed his English sources with increasing originality in his last two novels. *Halálfiat* (1927) and *Elza pilóta* (1918-1933) therefore testify a more mature processing⁵⁹ of their English source material. Both of these novels subsume their hypotexts and use their themes not only in their own way and context but also for their own purpose.

A gólyakalifa is Babits's creation of his own doppelgänger novel. In its writing Babits was inspired inter alia by the works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Edgar Allan Poe, Robert Louis Stevenson and Oscar Wilde. *A gólyakalifa* also contains Virgilian ideals such as the idyllic peace of the countryside. It has theoretical roots in Anglo-American psychology which Babits transformed into fiction.

Babits acknowledged in *Nyugat* that he was indebted to Dickens in his creation of his second novel: *Kártyavár*.⁶⁰ *Bleak House* as a source of the *intersection of textual planes*⁶¹ in this book is obvious to those who are acquainted with Dickens's work. Babits also utilised the ideas of Thomas Carlyle, John Stuart Mill and Thomas Babington Macaulay in *Kártyavár*. While the relationship of this novel with Dickens's fiction as its hypotext is explicit, its relation to its English philosophical

⁵⁸Intertextuality was coined by Julia Kristeva in the 1960s. It meant 'the literal and effective presence of one text in another text', *Intertextuality: Theories and Practices*, ed. Michael Worton and Judith Still (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1990), p. 22.

⁵⁹Quintilian describes this process as, 'Let us go over the text again and work on it. We chew our food and almost liquefy it before we swallow, so as to digest it more easily; similarly, let our reading be made available for memory and imitation, not in an undigested form, but, as it were softened and reduced to pap by frequent repetition', Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, ed. Donald A. Russell, 5 vols. (Cambridge, M. A. and London: H. U. P., 2001), iv, book x. i, 19, pp. 260-61.

⁶⁰*Nyugat*, 1 (1916) (131-33), p. 133.

⁶¹'It is impossible to lay out the languages of the novel on a single plane, to stretch them out along a single line. It is a system of intersecting planes. [...] The author (as creator of the novelistic whole) cannot be found at any one of the novel's language levels: he is to be found at the centre of organization where all levels intersect', Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination* (London: University of Texas, 1981), pp. 48-49. Bakhtin writes about Pushkin's use of registers in *Onegin* but the same characteristic applies to Babits's use of his English, classical and Anglo-classical exemplars such as Dickens.

sources points towards a more original type of intermodal transformation.⁶² Finally *Kártyavár* shows the failure of the foundation of a town and of national development which makes it an opposite of *The Aeneid*. If one really intended to, one could also read it as an anti-utopia.

Babits transformed English texts and reinterpreted the figure of Virgil and works by Virgil in *Timár Virgil fia*. He adopted the lyric approach of certain classics-based English Romantic verse, and intermodally transformed the lyric mode into prose fiction. Apart from its many Latin quotations (intertext), this novel is an autonomous (indirect) hypertext of its Anglo-classical lyric foundations.

Halálfiái (1927) is Babits's longest novel. It is an original structural hypertext that is architext of works by Fielding, Smollett, Goldsmith, and George Meredith. It also shows the adaptation of particular scenes and landscape descriptions from George Meredith's *The Egoist*. It forms an explicit intertext with Meredith's wording in these particular cases. *Halálfiái* contains many archetypes which designate its roots in the English and European lore of novel writing. The Anglo-European root material acquires its own meaning in the Hungarian novel. The concrete English references are also packed with meaning in *Halálfiái*. I will explicate the relevance of the English and European trope system in my writing. The Virgilian ideal *Halálfiái* illustrates is the stability that lies in the cultivation of the land.

Elza pilóta (1933) is an obvious but highly original transformation of its English models. These roots are science-fictional and utopian stories. It imaginatively transforms Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver Travels*, as well as Edgar Allan Poe's and Herbert George Wells's works. It is also interpretive of some of its sources, such as

⁶²Genette, *Palimpsests* (1997), p. 277.

More's *Utopia* and Bacon's *New Atlantis*, and therefore reads as a metatext⁶³ of these.⁶⁴ Like *A gólyakalifa*, it has a Virgilian sub-theme: war. The beginning of this novel explicitly refers to *The Aeneid*.

One aspect of inter-literary investigation is the difference that foreign sources make to the particular works of a national literary canon.⁶⁵ In the case of Babits this difference is more than considerable. His rich literary inheritance enabled him to use a much wider source material than most of his precursors and contemporaries. He was often called *poeta doctus*, and with good reason.⁶⁶ The English material within this range is especially important because only a few Hungarian authors had his knowledge of English literature and his outstanding creativity with which he utilised his English models. The English features make his oeuvre special in the Hungarian literary canon. He produced highly sophisticated narratives such as his *doppelgänger* novel and his anti-utopian science fiction story. These are without an equal in Hungarian literature.

My thesis is the first attempt to thoroughly investigate Babits's integrating⁶⁷ and differentiating forms of reception⁶⁸ of his sources in his five novels. I spent many years reading through the whole published Babits oeuvre for clues to their English

⁶³'is the relationship most often labeled "commentary." It unites a given text to another of which it speaks without citing it (without summoning it), in fact sometimes even without naming it', Genette, *Palimpsests* (1997), p. 4.

⁶⁴'The activity of reading is not exempt from the inevitable play of differentiation as well, which effects the setting of the limits for the critical task', G. A. Phillips, 'Sign/ Text/ Différance' in *Research in Text Theory*, ed. Heinrich F. Plett (Berlin; New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1991), p. 92.

⁶⁵'Every text is to be viewed as always already bound up within a systematic differentiating relationship with other texts, readings, readers, woven in Peirce's terms as sign to sign. One text defers, differs from, is differentiated from another', *ibid.*, p. 93.

⁶⁶'Pályájának különösen első szakaszában mutatkozik meg erősen "poeta doctus" volta', *A magyar irodalom története*, 2nd edn., ed. Tibor Klaniczay (Budapest: Kossuth, 1985), p. 288.

⁶⁷'If, in the act of reception, there predominates between the participating components of the interliterary relation the factor of identification, "agreement"', Dionýz Durišin, *Sources and Systematics of Comparative Literature*, trans. Peter Tkáč (Univerzita Komenského, 1974), p. 145.

⁶⁸'if there is a tendency for the elements to distance themselves from the character of the receiving side, then we speak of a differentiating form of reception', *ibid.*, pp. 145-46.

sources. These works contain abundant clues but often without exact dates. The dates of the clues are fairly precise and reliable for investigation when one reads Babits's novels, verses and essays. The data in these are at least contemporary with the work in which they are embedded. This is not the case with some other works. One example is Babits's *Az európai irodalom története*. Many Babits scholars use this book as a main source of reference. It is indeed crammed with data and ideas. However, one is not told when the author had acquired the data he writes about. One is, nevertheless, aware that Babits did not read his extensive corpus of European literature just before writing his history.⁶⁹ His book is an original product of well-digested reading material. Another fact to support this statement is that he wrote it on impulse between 1934-1936. He wrote it for *Tanú* and it doubled its size while he was writing it.⁷⁰

I also checked up contemporary periodicals and the contemporary secondary literature for data. The periodicals and especially *Nyugat* are helpful, and provide clues with dates. These data are exact because the issues of the periodicals are frequently the earliest published appearances of a source. Therefore Babits's acquisition of his data is approximately contemporary with the published articles. The writings of Babits's contemporaries and later critics are interesting to read but rarely provide exact and reliable information about Babits's acquaintanceship with his English sources. The main exceptions are the works of György Belia and György Rába. Belia is extremely knowledgeable on Babits's education and upbringing⁷¹ and Rába is an authority on Babits's integration of French literary examples.⁷² Belia's and Rába's knowledge of the Babits manuscript material is outstanding and so far

⁶⁹Mihály Babits, *Az európai irodalom története* (Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1979), p. 479.

⁷⁰Gábor Halász, *Az európai irodalom olvasókönyve* (Budapest: Magvető, 1978), p. 5.

⁷¹György Belia, *Babits Mihály tanulóiévei* (Budapest: Szépirodalmi kiadó, 1983).

⁷²György Rába, *Babits Mihály költészete 1903-1920* (Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1981).

unequalled. Rába also writes about Babits's integration and translation of English literary examples. One can trust their works and the data they provide. Their writings provided me with many clues that I was able to follow up successfully. Gál István's dissertation⁷³ is a standard work in this field. It is, nevertheless, an incomplete list of clues. He neglects the prose and only devotes a few lines to Babits's fiction. Gál sometimes also presents hearsay which cannot be supported. Since the publication of his work, new manuscripts have been processed. Recent editions of Babits's works contain far more reliable data than Gál had at his disposal. Gál awakens one's curiosity about the relevance of his subject matter, but does not interpret his findings.

Having completed my research into the Hungarian corpus I turned to the English sources that Babits and other scholars refer to and mention. I have read all the works I include in my thesis. I corroborated the forms Babits's novels take and their meanings with the English material I had read. I not only explain the ways in which Babits integrated his English sources, but also the new sense that his source material makes in its Hungarian context. Apart from the strictly literary context of the originally English corpus I also examine the intra-literary context of the finished literary artefacts. The intra-literary circumstances provide the English quality and orientation of the Babits fiction with further meanings. The theoretical material I read simultaneously with my research was invaluable in providing me with angles of how to look at and interpret my findings. I found the works of Dionyz Durišin, Jacques Derrida, Gérard Genette, Michael Riffaterre useful. I benefited from *Intertextuality: Theories and Practises* by Michael Worton and Judith Still. I also utilised Jay Clayton and Eric Rothstein's *Influence and Intertextuality in Literary History* and Robert

⁷³István Gál, *Babits és az angol irodalom*, Debreceni angol dolgozatok (Debrecen: Tisza István-Tudományegyetem angol szemináriuma 1942).

Young's *Untying the Text: A Post-structuralist Reader*. My findings interpret Babits's oeuvre in a new light, and provide many clues for further research.

***A gólyakalifa* (1916) | CHAPTER 1**

1.1 Contents	25
1.2 An introduction to the secondary literature of <i>A gólyakalifa</i>	26
1.3 The flight of the ego in <i>A gólyakalifa</i> and Poe's <i>William Wilson</i>	27
1.4 Babits's reconstruction of R. L. Stevenson's <i>Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde</i>	36
1.4.1 The supremacy of the respectable self	37
1.4.2 The alter ego	38
1.4.3 The alter ego's conquest over the main self	39
1.5 A diversion	42
1.5.1 <i>A gólyakalifa</i>'s roots in Coleridge	42
1.6 A further analysis of the roots and a parallel of Babits's novel	45
1.6.1 Morton Prince's and Dickens's role in the creation of <i>A gólyakalifa</i>	45
1.6.2 Ruskin and Proust	51
1.6.3 Dickens and Morton Prince	53
1.6.4 Morton Prince	55
1.6.5 <i>The Picture of Dorian Gray</i>	57
1.6.6 Virgil, Poe and Wilde: Conclusion	61

1.2 An introduction to the secondary literature of *A gólyakalifa*

The English sources of *A gólyakalifa* are relevant to consider because they determined the form and contents of Babits's novel. He utilised several types of English sources in order to create his work. The psychological theme of this *doppelgänger* story focuses on the nature of the ego. Babits was the originator of this kind of fiction in Hungarian literature.

Hungarian secondary literature regards Dickens's *Oliver Twist*,⁷⁴ Poe's *William Wilson*, Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, Wilde's *Dorian Gray*, Maugham's *Lord Mountdrago*⁷⁵ and Agatha Christie's *The Dream* as sources of inspiration for *A gólyakalifa*.

The stories of Agatha Christie's *The Dream* and Somerset Maugham's *Lord Mountdrago* resemble *A gólyakalifa*'s. However, neither *The Dream* nor *Lord Mountdrago* could have inspired Babits, since Agatha Christie did not start publishing her works until 1920 and *Lord Mountdrago* was only published in 1940 in *The Mixture as Before*.⁷⁶

From the data that are available on Babits's library and readings one knows that Babits had read *Dorian Gray* and *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*⁷⁷ before he wrote *A*

⁷⁴Huba Lőrinczy, 'A magyar századelő Twist Oliverje: Dickens-reminiscenciák *A Gólyakalifában*', *Literatura*, 3-4 (1976), 25-30.

⁷⁵Alexander Schneider, 'Traum und Wirklichkeit', *Fabula*, 11 (1970), iii, 278-79.

⁷⁶*Lord Mountdrago*, in *The World Over* (London: Reprint Society, 1954). See also Ted Morgan *Somerset Maugham* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1980), pp.436-38.

⁷⁷Babits correctly mentions Stevenson's novel in connection with the film 'Egy test két lélek' which in turn served as a source of inspiration for his verse, originally titled as 'Mozipark', 'Movie Park' and finally as 'Detektívhistória', 'A Detective Story' (*Nyugat*, 1920). See István Gál, 'Dokumentum: Babits egyes verseinek keletkezéséről', *Irodalomtörténet* 2 (1975), 443-62 (p. 446). The film Babits refers to is 'Peter Schlemihls', inspired by Adalbert von Chamisso's *Peter Schlemihls wundersame Geschichte* (1814). See *The Macmillan International Film Encyclopedia*, 4th edn., ed. Fred Klein and Dean Nolen (London; Basingstoke; Oxford: Macmillan, 2001), p. 1445. (Babits's own novel was definitely not inspired directly by Chamisso's novel. Babits's interest in psychology and in applied psychology is in parallel with Chamisso among many other writers. Babits's application of the *doppelgänger* in *A gólyakalifa* might have been inspired by Chamisso but is much closer to Poe's and even Stevenson's

gólyakalifa. Babits did not write that he had read *William Wilson*, but he was an avid reader of Poe during his early period and translated a substantial part of Poe's work.⁷⁸

Babits admired Dickens and transformed many themes of Dickens's works. In 'A magyar századelő Twist Oliverje' (1976) Huba Lőrinczy gave a brief description of how Babits followed *Oliver Twist*'s story in his creation of the alter ego's narrative in *A gólyakalifa*.⁷⁹

A gólyakalifa is Babits's attempt to produce a modernist architext by following and transforming models by Poe, Dickens, Stevenson and Wilde.

1.3 The flight of the ego in *A gólyakalifa* and Poe's *William Wilson*

Most critics, including Ferenc Odorics (1983),⁸⁰ mention Poe as a source of *A gólyakalifa*, but only from the point of view of mood. Poe's oeuvre had a much deeper role in the inspiration of the *A gólyakalifa*'s story. Amongst all Babits's sources, *William Wilson* is one of the most relevant literary roots of *A gólyakalifa* not only because of its structure but also because of the similar story of its protagonist.

stories than Chamisso's tale. The theme Babits chooses is totally different from Chamisso's. Babits writes about creativity and the subconscious in *A gólyakalifa*. Chamisso is preoccupied with avarice, and the role of the devil in *Peter Schlemihls*.

⁷⁸Babits on Poe: György Rába, *Szép hűtlenek: Babits, Kosztolányi, Tóth Árpád versfordításai* (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1969), p. 22, 72, 82, 99, pp. 55-57, 82-84, 196-99; Mihály Babits, 'Oidipusz király' (1911), in *Esszék és tanulmányok*, 2 vols. (Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1978), i, p. 206; 'Magyar irodalom' (1913), in *ibid.*, p. 361; 'Az irodalom elmélete' (1919), *ibid.*, pp. 636-38. The following works of Babits were based on those of Poe: 'Éjszaka', 'Night time' on 'The Raven'; 'Régi szálloda', 'Old Hotel' on *The Cask of Amontillado*, *The Tell-tale Heart*, *The Black Cat*, and *The Fall of the House of Usher*; 'Húnyt szemmel', 'With Closed Eyes' on 'A Dream within a Dream'; 'Fekete ország', 'Black Country' on the *Narrative of A. Gordon Pym*; 'Az örök folyosó', 'The Eternal Corridor' on *The Pit and the Pendulum*; 'A templom! Röpül!', 'The Church! Is flying!' on *The Fall of the House of Usher*; 'Kút', 'Well' on *The Pit and Pendulum*; 'Klasszikus álmok', 'Classical Dreams' on 'The Haunted Palace'; *A nyugtalanság völgye*, *The Valley of Unrest* (1920) on 'The Valley of Unrest'; 'Atlantis: egy világ, amely lemosdotta az életet', 'Atlantis: a World that has Washed Life off' on 'The City in the Sea'; et al. See: Babits Mihály *összegyűjtött versei*, ed. Ágnes Kelevész (Budapest: Osiris, 1997), *The Complete Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982); Mihály Babits, *Novellák és színjátékok* (Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1987), and *Babits Mihály levelezése 1890-1906*, ed. Sándor Zsoldos (Budapest: Historia Litteraria Alapítvány; Korona, 1998), pp. 168-69.

⁷⁹Huba Lőrinczy, 'A magyar századelő Twist Oliverje' (1976), 25-30.

⁸⁰Ferenc Odorics, 'A gólyakalifa története', Babits Mihály: *A Gólyakalifa*, *Napjaink*, 10 (1983), 8-10.

William Wilson begins his story by referring to his ancestry, trying to justify his shortcomings and oddity by it; Elemér starts his with his time at school. They both go back to their origins and try to trace a flaw in their lives from there. Thus the action of both protagonists' ordinary life self is based on their educational process. The tone of Babits's narrator is tenderness and introspection, and the key feature of Poe's is an inherent moral flaw in William Wilson.

The introduction of the alter ego in *William Wilson* takes place in his school, which is modelled on Poe's own.⁸¹ Elemér's surroundings are much more spacious in contrast. He is surrounded by a friendly Trans-danubian family circle. This setting is a mirror of his idyllically peaceful state of mind and social environment.

William Wilson's and Elemér Táborny's positions are similar at school. They are good students with unusual personalities. William Wilson's peace of mind will be destroyed by the appearance of another William Wilson. This alter ego starts school on the same day as he. It was born on the same date as he; and will neither accept his superiority nor succumb to his will. This antagonism remains their secret and outsiders remain ignorant of it at this stage.

Babits's Elemér has two schoolmates who upset him and, unlike the one in Poe, will not turn into his particular alter egos but serve to provide a background for the psychological qualities of the alter ego, and the alter ego's dream of a, still, other self. Laughter⁸² and whispering in *A gólyakalifa*, ~~such as~~ whispering in *William*

... like

⁸¹ 'The Manor House School is of singular interest. In his story of *William Wilson* Poe described in terms of fiction not only the place, but also its master, to whom he gave his right name of Bratsby, with the addition of a "Doctor" ', Arthur Hobson Quinn, *Edgar Allan Poe : A Critical Biography* (New-York; London: D. Appleton-Century, 1941), p. 73.

⁸² *The Nightmare* (1966), p. 10. 'Hódi Karcsi mindig szélesen kacagott, én mindig zavarba jöttem, és úgy éreztem, mintha én rajtam kacagna. Sehogy se tudtam leküzdeni ezt a kellemetlen érzést, megmagyarázni még kevésbé', *A gólyakalifa* (1982), p. 10. Karcsi Hódi always laughed heartily. His laughter embarrassed me because it made me feel as if he were laughing at me. I could not overcome let

Wilson, are a characteristic of the protagonist's self-image. They also signify the common life self and its alter ego's troublesome relationship. One notes that the alter ego in Poe turns up on the first day of school and the real alter ego in *A gólyakalifa* does not appear until the end of the sixth form. Both alter egos appear at a crucial stage in the education of their main selves.

William Wilson's initial feelings about his counterpart are those of 'a motley of heterogeneous admixture and [...] curiosity'.⁸³ As time passes, his alter ego becomes more and more like him, 'His cue which was to perfect an imitation of my self, lay both in his words and action, and most admirably did he play his part'.⁸⁴ He feels patronised and mocked by his alter ego whose whisper becomes a resonance of himself. His initial ambivalence towards his alter ego gradually turns into hatred. What is noteworthy in the description of this process is the alter ego's morality and wisdom.

Elemér is most frightened of his dream and the Stork-caliph before he actually dreams it. He is afraid of the terror inspired by the dreams he cannot remember. After having dreamt the first part of his dream, and thus become acquainted with his alter ego, he understands unruly features of his own reality, and describes his emotional attitude to this revelation as a shock. At the same time he also becomes curious about his unruly self. This process results in Elemér's ambivalence towards his alter ego. His ambivalence turns into hatred and becomes further coloured by his infatuation with it: 'Felülkerekedett bennem a kalandvágó gyermek: örültem az

alone explain this awkward feeling. (This is my own translation. Whenever I do not indicate a source, the translation is mine).

⁸³William Wilson (1984), p. 164.

⁸⁴Ibid., p. 166.

áломárnyéknak'.⁸⁵ At this stage both Babits's and Poe's ordinary life selves feel and think that they are in control of their alter egos. William Wilson thinks he can get rid of him, and Elemér thinks that he can work out his frightening dream-self. The narrator of *William Wilson* even comments on the nature of his memories and memory:

I discovered, in his accent, his air, and general appearance, a something which first startled, and then deeply interested me, by bringing to mind dim visions of my earliest infancy—wild, confused and thronging memories of a time when memory herself was yet unborn.⁸⁶

The operation of memory is one of the principal themes of *A gólyakalifa*. The analysis of this mental process is more complex but fundamentally copies William Wilson's.

Following an excursus on memory, a key part in *William Wilson* takes place in the bedroom of the old school. William Wilson creeps upstairs at night to ascertain the identity of his alter ego. The light he carries is symbolic of the revelation that should take place in the darkness. The outcome of the revelation is not entirely clear because of the contradiction between the hero's thinking and his sensual experience: 'Were these the lineaments of William Wilson. I saw, indeed, that they were his, but I shook as if with the fit of the ague in fancying they were not. What *was* there about them to confound me in this manner'.⁸⁷ Despite the deliberate obscurity of this scene, William Wilson realizes at this point that his alter ego is himself, and this experience causes him to flee. A similar turning point can be found in *A gólyakalifa*. In contrast with the dark, closed bedroom of *William Wilson*, the scene of revelation in Babits

⁸⁵ *A gólyakalifa* (1982), p. 37. 'The adventure-loving child gained the upper hand: I rejoiced at the oneiric shadow', *The Nightmare* (1966), p. 39.

⁸⁶ *William Wilson* (1984), p. 167.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 168.

resembles the school celebration at the beginning of the novel. It is light and airy. Its main components are silence, the freedom of the sea, the beauty of Venice; a beautiful garden; the arts and love. The only difference from the first environment in which the narrator introduced the alter ego is the change in the meaning of the landscape. The former was of a socio-psychological character and the latter is of an aesthetic-psychological character tinged with the harmony of love and nature. The realisation that he is inseparable from, and therefore one with, his alter ego takes place in the context of this Venetian environment. From the pattern of his selves' life-functions he realizes their inter-related nature: 'Most már tudtam, mi volt az: a díjnoknak reggel jókor hivatalba kellett menni, ezért Táborny Elemér kényszerült korán elaludni'.⁸⁸

It is also at this point in both stories that the protagonist's belief in the supremacy of the main self is shattered, giving rise to the flight of the ordinary life self. The geographical delineation of the flight provides a setting for the gradually increasing desperation of the ordinary life self, which is simultaneous with the growing supremacy of the alter ego.

The first stage of William Wilson's flight is Eton and his moving on to Oxford is an elaboration of the same stage from a psychological point of view. At Eton he becomes oblivious to his alter ego and indulges in debauched parties until his alter ego reappears, rebukes him and torments him. The alter ego's appearance is connected with the imagination, and is rendered as real despite the disordered state of the mind of the common life self. The reason for this is rationally explained by the claim that the alter ego had to leave school just after the common life self had left. At

⁸⁸ *A gólyakalifa* (1982), p. 79. Now I knew what it was: the clerk had to start work really early in the office, and this is why Elemér Táborny was obliged to go to sleep early.

Oxford, Wilson reaches the peak of his own corruption. He gambles without scruple and swindles Glendding out of all his money when his alter ego appears again; whispers his sins into his ear, and publicly denounces him. From here on William Wilson is completely at the mercy of his other self, and is tormented by him constantly. William Wilson's continental flight takes place after the Oxford scene. At this point the hero's despair reaches its peak and his flight becomes a matter of life and death: '*I fled in vain*'⁸⁹. My evil destiny pursued me as if in exultation, and proved, indeed, that the exercise of its mysterious dominion had as yet only begun'.⁹⁰ He tries to identify his alter ego: 'Who is he?—whence came he?—and what are his objects?' But no answer was there to be found'.⁹¹ In sheer terror and panic, he continues to fly from Paris to Rome; from Rome to Vienna; from Vienna to Berlin, and from Berlin to Moscow, but he does flee in vain. After a long deliberation on his other identity, and his power of interference with his will, his despair fully overtakes him. He starts drinking heavily to escape his own identity into oblivion. Finally he decides to conquer his other self, who is now in command of him.

In *A gólyakalifa* Elemér goes from Venice to Verona, and instead of gaining confidence in himself, becomes confused: 'Itt ültem én, messze és egyedül és azt sem tudtam már, Táborny Elemér vagyok-e igazán'.⁹² He becomes even more confused while he is searching for an explanation for the interwoven quality of his two selves, and flees on to Milan. In Milan the dream-self takes over the real self completely.

⁸⁹William Wilson (1984), p. 175.

⁹⁰Ibid., p. 175.

⁹¹Ibid., p. 175.

⁹²*A gólyakalifa* (1982), p. 85. 'Here I sat, far away and alone, and really and truly no longer knew whether I was Elemér Táborny or not', *The Nightmare* (1966), p. 91.

‘Szegény, szegény gólyakalifa! Most már Táborny Elemér volt a gólyakalifa’.⁹³ From here on the real self loses its footing in society and starts to morally decay. The fleeing becomes incessant. The scenes of Elemér’s distracted travels are: Punta di Bellagio, Isola Bella, Simplon, Mont Blanc, Chamonix, and ‘the icy steps of the *Mer de Glace*’.⁹⁴

Lucerne is the last stage of Elemér’s flight. By the time Elemér arrives in Lucerne, he is fully merged with his alter ego. The mastery of the oneiric self is the result of this unification. This leads to corruption, one feature of which is gambling. One can find the same motif in *William Wilson*. After the originally subordinated self gains the upper hand, which is the case in both works, the hero will fall publicly. Both protagonists become incapable of survival.

The Poe story reaches its final scene after the despair of the real self culminates, and William Wilson decides on a final retaliation against his alter ego. *A gólyakalifa* contains two more sections from the point of view of the main self. One of these is Elemér’s stay in Budapest. He wants to change his life here, and conquer his corrupt alter ego by working. His failure is described as: ‘A félelem, a remegés szállt új vendégként mindkét életembe’.⁹⁵ He also begins to fear that the clerk would really commit suicide or become a murderer: ‘Magam sem tudtam, de úgy tűnt fel nekem, hogy a díjnok katasztrófája az Elemérét is magával fogja vonni’.⁹⁶

Not only Elemér but also his alter ego is overtaken by despair at this stage. The oneiric self’s despair strengthens the boundless despair Elemér feels. He is

⁹³ *A gólyakalifa* (1982), p. 87. Poor, poor Stork-caliph! Now Elemér Táborny was the Stork-caliph.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

⁹⁵ *A gólyakalifa* (1982), p. 97. ‘Fear and trembling overtook both my lives’, *The Nightmare* (1966), p. 105.

⁹⁶ *A gólyakalifa* (1982), p. 97. ‘Why was I afraid of this? I hardly knew why but it seemed to me that the tragedy of the clerk would drag Elemér with it’, *The Nightmare* (1966), p. 105.

tortured by his own failure, which is the result of his oneiric self's irrevocable conquest over him. The realities of his own and his oneiric self completely merge in Elemér's consciousness. This leads to his mental collapse.

In the last scene he finds himself at home. The last flight of the oneiric self will take place while Elemér is at home and will lead to the extermination of his alter ego and himself. In this last section the oneiric self conducts itself without any moral or social constraints, precisely as William Wilson does in Poe's story.

The endings of *A gólyakalifa* and *William Wilson* are also alike from the point of view of the originally supreme self. William Wilson attends a carnival and is suddenly halted by the well known whisper of his other self. His alter ego is dressed in the same attire as he. The door closes on the main self, symbolising the trapped state of the master ego. They fight, and he kills his other self in a frenzy. By killing his alter ego he kills himself:

At this instant the door is closed, and his visual perception of the room changes. He can see his own stabbed self and the other William Wilson lying untouched on the floor. His face is *his own*, and he starts talking to him without whispering, '*see by this image, which is thine own, how utterly thou hast murdered himself*'.⁹⁷

In *A gólyakalifa* it is after the scene of the murder of the prostitute that Elemér loses his presence of mind irretrievably: 'én, én, aki egy utcaleányt megöltem, lehetek-e egyúttal, egy személyben Etelka vőlegénye'.⁹⁸ On the level of the dream-self's story-line, this is the peak of the oneiric self's corruption. Elemér gathers all his will-power, and decides that that day his oneiric self is going to kill itself. One only learns from a letter appended by the editor that the oneiric self has shot itself. This

⁹⁷William Wilson (1984), p. 178.

⁹⁸*A gólyakalifa* (1982), p. 123. 'Could I, Etelka's fiancé, be the same man who killed a prostitute?', *The Nightmare* (1966), p. 131.

also states that he has died as well and the revolver has not been found: 'halva találták őt szobájában lőtt sebbel, és semmiféle fegyver sem volt körülötte. Mi történhetett? Semmiféle nyomozás nem vezetett eredményre'.⁹⁹ This is a copy of Poe's formula of suicide. Babits only modifies the style. He uses a reporter's objectivity to describe the extraordinary consequence of the process. This is in contrast with Poe's fantastical hallucinatory style.

In the process of murder William Wilson treats the two selves as two separate characters up to the end. It is at this point that it is clearly revealed that they are the same self. Until now this has only been hinted at. The hero's illusions are part of this structure, and confirm that the whole story could have only existed in the mind: it is a creation of the imagination. In Babits's description the murder is based on an act of will by a confused mind, and its fantastical quality, as in Poe, makes the whole story a product of the imagination.

The above analysis shows how Babits copied the structure and modified the themes that can be found in Poe. He turned Poe's narrative structure into the skeleton of his own. This genetic link is unquestionable for me because this type of *doppelgänger* story did not exist in Hungarian literature before Babits's version. Babits, however, changed the meaning of the story he had copied. While Poe's alter ego is an expression of William Wilson's conscience, *A gólyakalifa*'s focus on psychology is more subtle and complex than Poe's. One reason for this is the findings of *fin de siècle* psychology and the advanced novel writing techniques which contributed to Babits's achievement.

⁹⁹*A gólyakalifa* (1982), p. 128. 'he was found dead in his room, a shot wound in his forehead, but no weapon anywhere. What could have happened? The subsequent investigation was quite futile', *The Nightmare* (1966), p. 134.

1.4 Babits's reconstruction of R. L. Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll and Mr*

Hyde

It is a fact that Babits admired the innovative quality of the modern English novel. In addition to Poe and Dickens, *A gólyakalifa* was inspired by the novels of Robert Louis Stevenson¹⁰⁰ and Henry James.¹⁰¹ Babits wrote:

Én szívesebben olvasok Galsworthynél négy—öt másik újabb angol író, akik a regény kivénhedt műfaját új formákkal és szerkesztés móddal, új lélekkutató módszerekkel s merész, felfedezészerű témákkal próbálják megfrissíteni; soha annyi forrongást, olyan belső s ígéretekkal terhes műfajbomlást, mint amit a mai angol regény mutat!¹⁰²

The different narratives and their characters' points of view in *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* show Jekyll in a varied perspective. The entire work contains a variation of different narratives, such as first person singular diary writing and letters. Babits likewise used all these types of narratives. Even when the narrators die, their stories survive, and compose the novel.

Babits's transformation of Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* in *A gólyakalifa* is also subtle from a thematic point of view. Babits combined the primarily moral theme of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*'s with a sophisticated psychological approach.

The history of the main character, and his alter ego in 'Henry Jekyll's Full Statement of the Case' is written in the first person, and is a major root of Elemér's story.

¹⁰⁰Mihály Babits, 'Könyvek angol költészetről', *Nyugat*, 1 (1911), p. 957, see also Mihály Babits, *Az európai irodalom története* (1979), pp. 434, 441.

¹⁰¹Mihály Babits, *Keresztülkaszul az életemen* (Budapest: Kairosz, 1997), pp. 81-82.

¹⁰²'As opposed to Galsworthy, I much prefer reading another four or five contemporary English writers who are trying to enliven the archaic genre of the novel with new forms, structures and psychology. There has never been such a heavy promise in the fermenting disintegration of a genre, as in the case of the present-day English novel', Mihály Babits, 'Galsworthy', *Nyugat*, 5 (1933), p. 307.

1.4.1 The supremacy of the respectable self

Jekyll describes himself as follows: ‘fond of the respect of the wise and good among my fellow-men, [...] with every guarantee of an honourable and distinguished future [...] the worst of my faults was a certain impatient gaiety of disposition’.¹⁰³

He feels ashamed of this ‘duplicity’ in his nature. Because of ‘the rather exacting nature of his aspirations’, and his moral strictness, he considers the light-hearted side of his self as a curse. He comes to the conclusion that his ‘gaiety’ and his respectability must be separated, so that his respectable self could be fully respectable, and his unrespectable self could fully enjoy himself. This preoccupation becomes his ‘beloved daydream’, and he tries to realize it in his laboratory. While executing this project, he knows he is risking death, but he cannot resist the temptation and creates a magic potion which brings about the first transformation of his former self.

In Babits’s novel Elemér also talks about the duplicity of his nature at the beginning of his story. He introduces his respectable self in his school environment, and expresses the unrespectable side of his self as an apprentice in the workshop. This negative oneiric self appears completely out of the blue. Initially it is only morally weak, but later it becomes evil. It awakens his inquisitiveness. He realises that his dreams carry and continue all his own and their own oneiric memories. After the next instalment of his dreams he turns to books to find an explanation for this phenomenon. He becomes reassured that his case is not that of split personality, since his memories are continually carried on in his dreams: ‘egy közönséges folytatólagos álom, igaz, hogy nagyon kellemetlen álom, de az ébrenlétbe nem nyúlik bele, és

¹⁰³Robert Louis Stevenson, *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979), p. 81.

valószínűleg majd elmúlik'.¹⁰⁴

Later on Elemér talks about experiencing a novel in his dream. He thinks he knows everything about it, and being certain that he is in control of it, he awaits its next instalment with curiosity. This is an ingenious formal innovation on Babits's part: he incorporates the motif of a literary form into his hero's dream.

Comparing these initial parts of the two narratives, it is interesting to see how similar ideas and themes are applied in different contexts. Both Elemér and Jekyll have double selves that they feel ashamed of because of the social environment of their respectable selves. The double nature is clearly defined by an opposition of respectability and un-respectability culminating in good and evil in Jekyll's case. Although it carries the same distinctions, it is expressed in oneiric episodes in Elemér's instance. These episodes concern passive childhood experience of feeling and the creative subconscious connected with memory. While Jekyll's approach to his inherent double nature is that of an adult man with life experience, Elemér encounters his double self accidentally, in the state of childhood innocence. They both, nevertheless, are curious and try to understand the nature of their double selves. They are also equally confident that they will be able to cope with their double-selves with the help of science.

1.4.2 The alter ego

Through a painful process, Jekyll takes on Hyde's form. Hyde is characterized as a slave to personal evil. His body is deformed, which is explained by the fact that only the good part of the self is trained by life, since nine-tenths of life is an effort to be

¹⁰⁴ *A gólyakalifa* (1982), p. 58. My translation: an ordinary dream in successive parts—truly, a most unpleasant dream—but it does not stretch into the waking state and will probably not last long.

good. Jekyll, nevertheless, feels no repugnance towards Hyde, and is awed by the crimes Hyde commits. He makes a place of residence for Hyde, and introduces him to the reader in his own environment. Elemér's dream alter ego resembles Hyde in his initially weak and later criminal nature. The crimes of both alter egos deteriorate as the story proceeds. While, however, Hyde is wholly evil, Elemér's alter ego is a negative version of Elemér's self and incorporates positive aspects of his self as well.

1.4.3 The alter ego's conquest over the main self

One morning after Sir Danver's murder, Jekyll wakes up, or perceives that he wakes up, as Hyde: 'I was still so engaged when, in one of my more wakeful moments, my eye fell upon my hand.[...] It was the hand of Edward Hyde'.¹⁰⁵ He is aware of his position, and formulates it as follows: 'the balance of my nature might be permanently overthrown, the power of voluntary change be forfeited, and the character of Edward Hyde become irrevocably mine'.¹⁰⁶

He makes an effort to side with his respectable self. He is, nevertheless, tempted again and again and succumbs to the temptation of Hyde: the devil 'long caged came out roaring'. Thus he commits his next, even more horrible crime. Jekyll feels an admixture of perverse pleasure, satisfaction and repentance at the crimes he commits in the guise of Hyde. It is after these crimes that his main consciousness, calculating ego loses its mastery over Hyde: 'this brief condescension to my evil finally destroyed the balance of my soul'.¹⁰⁷ In the following episode, Jekyll designs and executes a way of getting back into his own shape, out of Hyde's, and returns to

¹⁰⁵*Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1979), p. 87.

¹⁰⁶*Ibid.*, p. 89.

¹⁰⁷*Ibid.*, p. 92.

his house. In this episode Hyde becomes even more deformed in his seedy surrounding, and kills Lanyon.

From this point, Jekyll's desperate struggle to preserve the mastery of his better self begins. Jekyll, once the controller of his self, and Hyde become completely trapped. Like the two selves in Poe's *William Wilson*, they remain locked in a room. The minute Jekyll falls asleep he changes into Hyde, and needs more and more drugs to turn himself back into Jekyll. His physical self, even when present, is wasting away because of illness and Hyde's supremacy becomes irretrievable. Jekyll's struggle against sleep and Hyde proves ineffective and culminates in despair. The despair of what had been the master-self leads to his physical death. The reader is left with Jekyll's manuscripts only.

In *A gólyakalifa* the realization of the oneiric alter ego's power takes place in Venice. Elemér has to realize that his oneiric self is also himself. In Budapest Elemér tries to overcome the supremacy of his negative, mostly oneiric alter ego and fails. He collapses and is taken home. While Elemér is making attempts to recover, his oneiric ego's crimes become increasingly serious. This process finishes with a perverse murder. Finally, the oneiric ego conquers the common life self completely by the terror it exerts over it. This culminates in the murder of the oneiric alter ego and the main ego's suicide. After the complete annihilation of the personality, the reader will be, again, left with manuscripts only.

Looking at the analyses of the two common life selves, it is easy to see the themes that the story-lines of the two different selves and their alter egos share. After the realization of the inseparability of the common life self and the alter ego, the common life self loses control both socially and morally, and the alter ego takes the real self over by its terror. The description of transitional states between the waking

and sleeping self before Jekyll's death is similar to Elemér's struggle against sleep. The main selves and their alter egos are connected through their sleeping pattern in both novels. This suggests that Babits copied the pattern of sleeping and waking in *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. Two attempts are made in *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* and in *A gólyakalifa* to regain the control of the former supreme self but they prove ineffectual.

A key difference between the two stories is that Jekyll can follow this process with his reason throughout. Even in the end when he struggles against sleep, and seems to lose his senses, his reason is there. His story, even after his fall, remains that of the fall of a man of experience and reason for which his rational self is responsible. Elemér's fall and collapse are those of an innocent and suffering creative personality.¹⁰⁸

Apart from the fact that Stevenson's writing is a main intertextual genetic link of *A gólyakalifa* a comparative study of these two pieces is also rewarding. The comparative reading shows the differences that Babits creates from his thematic precursor such as dealing with an innocent and socially dependent ego instead of an experienced and independent one.

¹⁰⁸This is my interpretation of *A gólyakalifa*. I have unquestionable proof that Babits was deeply preoccupied with psychology. Not only his direct reference to Morton Prince's book, but also his essay on *The American Journal of Psychology* attest to his interest. See *Esszék és tanulmányok* (1978), i, pp. 17-19. Babits mentions other psychologists that he studied in his correspondence. One can find a reference to Théodule Armand Ribot in a letter Babits wrote before 1908. See *Babits-Juhász-Kosztolányi levelezése* (1959), p. 175. Ribot was a specialist psychologist in the creative imagination and the operation of the memory. See Théodule Ribot, *Essay on the Creative Imagination* (London: Kegan Paul and Trübner, 1906), and *Diseases of the Memory* (London: Kegan Paul and Trench, 1882).

1.5 A diversion

1.5.1 *A gólyakalifa*'s roots in Coleridge

The protagonist narrator of *A gólyakalifa* incorporates three different systems of reality into his narrative. One is Elemér's real environment, which is peaceful and at times even idyllic. (The only exception to this is the finishing section of the first half of the novel, and Elemér's Italian flight). A second reality is his distant and recent memories, which are from the negative projection of the society surrounding him. These are emblematic of his dreams. The third is his continuous dream, which demonstrates his oneiric alter ego. He says of it: 'a második múltam nem egyéb, mint egy rossz álom, talán most már többet elő sem jön, kitudom magamból. Erős fantáziám az oka, hogy ilyen élénk'.¹⁰⁹ This alter ego is an involuntary creation of Elemér's mind. The themes and motifs of the stories of these three worlds move in and out of each other's interrelated narratives.

These three spheres of experience have a root in Coleridge's different faculties of the creative mind. According to the *Biographia Literaria* the primary imagination perceives things and thus creates a reality in the mind. The secondary imagination re-creates this reality in union with the conscious will. The fancy is memory without its settings and modified by the will according to the choice of the mind.¹¹⁰

Alkotó képzelet, *Creative Imagination* is a free transcription of Coleridge's theory. It attests to Babits's preoccupation with the operation of the creative mind. It

¹⁰⁹ *A gólyakalifa* (1982), p. 37. 'Certainly this second past was nothing but a bad dream; perhaps it would not even recur again, I could drive it from myself. Only my keen imagination was to blame for its vividness', *The Nightmare* (1966), p. 39.

¹¹⁰ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* (London; Vermont: J. M. Dent; Charles E. Tuttle, 1997), p. 175.

also shows that Babits knew and applied Coleridge's ideas:

A látott és hallott dolgok emléke csak építőanyag volt, hogy valami sohse látottat és sohse hallottat építsen föl,—Ellenőrizheti ezt mindenki a maga emlékeiből: a fantázia —produktum igazában és lényegében nem külső valóság-elemek kombinációja, hanem valamely belső érzelemnek az objektiválása, s mint ilyen, egészen új, valóságos teremtés, oly valaminek megjelenése a világban ami még nem létezett.¹¹¹

Babits's creative attachment to the *Arabian Nights* is in common with Coleridge's.¹¹² Coleridge's interest in them, was part of the Romantic approval of the creative imagination, and imaginary art forms such as visions, legends, and fairy tales. Coleridge read *The Arabian Nights* as a child: 'At six years old he had read *Robinson Crusoe* and turned to the *Arabian Nights*. These frightened him so much that he was, he tells us, 'haunted by spectres' whenever he was alone in the dark'.¹¹³

Babits's expression of his interest in *Scheherazade* can not only be found in *A gólyakalifa* but also in *Erato*,¹¹⁴ which is Babits's selection of erotic verse from classical and modern poets. *A Gólyakalifa*'s title is from *Scheherazade* too and key motifs, such as the imaginary transformation of the protagonist, are a common one in the Arabian tales. Thus this novel can be read as a refutation of the stories of the *Arabian Nights* since it refutes not only the idea of positive magic but even a wholesome development of the narrator's creative personality. The creative personality which can be identified with the narrator suffers and finally dies.

¹¹¹'The memory of things seen and heard was only the building material for him to construct something which he had otherwise never seen or heard. Everybody can check this from their own memories. The product of one's fantasy is not really the combination of outside reality but the objectivisation of a feeling inside. In this quality it is the creation of something entirely new, and the appearance of something in the world that has never existed before', OSzK (Hungarian National Library), fond III/1422.

¹¹²'There is one book, for example, more generally loved than Shakespeare, that captivates in childhood, and still delights in age—I mean the *Arabian Nights*—where you should look in vain for moral or intellectual interest. No human face or voice greets us among that wooden crowd of kings and genies, sorcerers and beggar men', 'A Gossip on Romance' in *Selected Short Stories of R. L. Stevenson*, ed. Ian Campbell (Edinburgh: Ramsay, 1980), p. 28.

¹¹³Stephen Prickett, *Victorian Fantasy* (Hassocks: Harvester, 1979).

¹¹⁴Mihály Babits, *Erato*, ed. György Belia (Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1970).

Kubla Khan is the most concise expression of a destructive trance in which the palace of art is being built. Coleridge's experience of this state, however, was also painful and finally lethal: 'To lie in ease yet dull anxiety for hours, afraid to think a thought, lest some thought of anguish should shoot a pain athwart my body, afraid even to turn my body, lest the very bodily motion should induce a train of painful thoughts—' ¹¹⁵

Babits summarises his assessment of this phenomenon in a letter in 1908. This proves his interest in this subject and another genetic root of his work in Coleridge:

Coleridge verseit is most olvastam. Coleridge egy angol Poe, ami annyit jelent, hogy moralista Poe, de szintén bírja a nyelvnek és verselésnek azt a szinte tündéri varázsát, ami az amerikai költőnél megkap. Az *Ancient Mariner* és a *Christabel*, mindkettő utánoszhatatlan, és mint az értekezésben olvastam, tényleg befejezhetetlen töredék (a Vén tengerész befejezett): a legrégebbi típusú kísérteties rémhistóriák, a legmodernebb, legimpresszionistább hangulatban, nyelvben, felfogásban feltálalva. [...] Ópiumot ivott és elzülött mint Poe. ¹¹⁶

In this respect *A gólyakalifa* is Babits's attempt to explain a lethal process that creativity might entail. It is also a reaction to the verse of Coleridge and Poe since, like Babits's narrator, both Coleridge and Poe suffered from the nightmares of their creative minds. ¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ *A Choice of Coleridge's Verse*, ed. Ted Hughes (London: Faber, 1996), p. 15.

¹¹⁶ 'I have just read Coleridge's poems. Coleridge is an English Poe, by which I mean that he is a moralist Poe but possesses that magical charm of the language and poetry which characterizes the American poet. *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and *Christabel* are both inimitable, and as I have read in an essay, are fragments whose completion is really not possible (*The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* is finished): they are haunting ghost stories of the most ancient type, and are expressed in the most impressionistic mood and language according to the latest fashion. He could not adopt the same magical voice afterwards. [...] He drank opium and became an alcoholic like Poe', *Babits Juhász Kosztolányi levelezése* (1959), p. 175.

¹¹⁷ 'Modern psychiatric research supports my observations of Babits's creative character. Babits was a completely sound person from a psychiatric point of view, and wrote this piece about an author with abnormal delusions. His creative protagonist is much weaker in mind than he was. 'Biographical studies designed to discover the extent to which historically important creative individuals have experienced psychotic or related disorders, have been one of the most popular tests of the association between creativity and psychopathology. These studies have generally demonstrated a closer relationship between creativity and mood disorders as opposed to creative achievement and schizophrenia', Raj Persaud,

1.6. A further analysis of the roots and a parallel of Babits's novel

1.6.1 Morton Prince's and Dickens's role in the creation of *A gólyakalifa*

The episode of the kick is one example which demonstrates Babits's preoccupation with sensual experience.¹¹⁸

Behunytam a szememet, lassanként nagyon melegem lett—és ekkor történt az első különös dolog, amivel akkor persze nem sokat gondoltam, mert azt hittem, csak álom. *Valaki megrúgott*. Éspedig egy meztelen láb rúgott rajtam egyet, éreztem és ami a legfurcsább, semmi különöset se találtam benne. Felnyitottam a szememet: *egészen sötét volt*, és ezt is akkor egész természetesnek vettem. Csak egy pillanatig tartott az egész. Egy esőcsepp hullott arcomra, felugrottam.¹¹⁹

In this field Babits's theoretical basis undoubtedly has its roots in Morton Prince's book¹²⁰ An episode concerning the issue of perception and the awareness of it is explained by Morton:

The hypnotic self, when questioned, was able to tell how many times the finger had been pricked, and whether it had been touched, stroked, or bent. She could also describe, down to the slightest detail, the various performances with the rod, when Miss Beauchamp failed to see it. Inasmuch as the lost sensory impressions were now remembered in hypnosis, they must have been perceived, in spite of the fact that Miss Beauchamp had not felt or seen the respective stimuli. This means that the perceptions must have remained subconscious, that is, dissociated from the personal perception.¹²¹

Babits's interest in this subject must have been also strengthened by his reading of Dickens. Elemér feels that he is kicked. He, nevertheless, thinks that he only dreams

From the Edge of the Couch: Bizarre psychiatric cases and what they teach us about ourselves, 2nd edn. (London, New York, Toronto: Bantam, 2004), p. 33.

¹¹⁸I write about Babits's readings on this subject in the introduction.

¹¹⁹*A gólyakalifa* (1982), p. 19. 'I closed my eyes and began to feel very hot—and then the first strange thing happened, though it did not worry me very much then because I thought it was only a dream. *Someone kicked me*. And the kick had been delivered by a bare foot. I could feel it, and what was strangest of all, I did not feel that there was anything unusual in it. I opened my eyes: *it was completely dark*, and this again seemed quite natural at the time. The whole incident lasted only a second. A drop of rain fell on my face and I jumped up', *The Nightmare* (1966), p. 19.

¹²⁰Babits refers to this by its title in *A gólyakalifa*, (1982), pp. 56-57. See Morton Prince, *The Dissociation of a Personality: a Bibliographical Study in Abnormal Psychology* (New York; London; Bombay: Longmans; Green: 1906).

¹²¹*Ibid.*, pp. 72-73.

about being kicked. Durdles dropped the key of the crypt according to his dream. He can, however, see the key. He picks it up but only remembers his dream. These two episodes describe the same phenomenon from a psychological point of view. The protagonists only remember their dreams about an incident that has happened:

Durdles is asleep at once; and in his sleep he dreams a dream. [...] As Durdles recalls that touching something in his dream, he looks down on the pavement, and sees the key of the crypt door lying close to where he himself lay. 'I dropped you, did I?' he says, picking it up, and recalling that part of his dream.¹²²

Elemér's meditations on an engineer, Kincses, manifest the same sort of preoccupation with the way memories and dreams make sense in the mind. Kincses comes from Salt Lake City in America: '*Ott akkor van reggel, mikor nálunk este*'¹²³, Elemér seems to remember his face from somewhere.

Elemér's oneiric child alter ego is an orphan. He works in a workshop as an apprentice. He is anxious and without any prospects. He runs away, and aimlessly roams the streets. He is hungry and has little idea of how to go about finding some work.¹²⁴ This oneiric story-line represents its hero while dreaming:

Ó, milyen jó aludni és álmodni mindenfélét.—Csak emlékezném jól arra, amit álmodtam!—Böm—bömböm—törtem ki megint, arra a gondolatra, hogy csak álom volt minden és nem igaz, és én itt vagyok.¹²⁵

During the oneiric story-line the narrator of *A gólyakalifa* occasionally intervenes to comment on the clarity or obscurity of a dream's image in the

¹²²Charles Dickens, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), pp. 157-58. Compare an experiment about associating visual and tactile perception with a key in Morton Prince, *The Dissociation of a Personality* (1906), pp. 144-145.

¹²³*A gólyakalifa* (1982), p. 17. 'It's morning there when it's evening here', *The Nightmare* (1966), p. 18.

¹²⁴Huba Lőrinczy mentions the similarity of his story to that of Oliver Twist. See Huba Lőrinczy, 'A magyar századelő Twist Oliverje' (1976), 25-30.

¹²⁵*A gólyakalifa* (1982), p. 25. 'Oh, how good it was to sleep to have all kinds of dreams! 'Buh-huh-huh,' I sobbed at the thought that all this had been a mere dream, not the truth, and I was here', *The Nightmare* (1966), p. 26.

protagonist's consciousness: 'Amily részletesen emlékeztem e nap eseményeire eddig a pontig, olyan homályos előttem, hogy mi történt velem ezután'.¹²⁶

He also weaves into the story half-dreaming or half-conscious states. Babits's transposition of Dickens's psychological and philosophical themes from *Edwin Drood* is especially relevant in this respect. I quote again from Durdles's dream:

From succeeding unconsciousness he passes into a dream of slow uneasiness from cold; and painfully awakes to a perception of the lanes of light—really changed, much as he had dreamed—and Jasper walking among them, beating his hands and feet.¹²⁷

In the *A gólyakalifa*'s architext, the oneiric self is questioned in a dream. This cross-examination has the same kind of philosophical approach as the one the waking self applies to his story in Dickens:

feketén potyogtak rá a kenyérre, és megettem a kenyérrel együtt. Olyan volt minden, mint valami rossz álom. Éreztem, hogy most kellene gondolni valamire, valami szép és tiszta dologra, ami mindjárt megvigasztalna. [...] Álmodom, álmodom talán? Jaj, jaj, dehogy lehet ez álom! Kisgyerek korom óta mindig csak álmodok? Egész magamat csak álmodtam? Jaj, jaj, dehogy lehet ez álom ... ami így fáj ... De a másik se lehet álom, ez a nagy fényes, nem tudom mi....¹²⁸

After the final awakening from this section of the dream, Elemér tries to clarify the connection between the images of his memory, reality and his oneiric experience by applying his scientific philosophical approach. He goes to the cemetery with his granny and recites verses by Ovid on the way there. He realizes that he does not have a father in his dream, and laughs at himself for treating his dream as if it were reality. On his return, when he decides to write everything down, he comments

¹²⁶ *A gólyakalifa* (1982), p. 34. 'The clarity with which I recall the events of the day up to this point is equalled only by the obscurity with which the rest is veiled', *The Nightmare* (1966), p. 36.

¹²⁷ *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1985), p. 157.

¹²⁸ *A gólyakalifa* (1982), p. 27. My translation: The sooty drops fell on the bread and I ate them with it. All this was like a bad dream. I felt that now I should think of something nice and clean that would give me immediate comfort[...] Am I dreaming, only dreaming perhaps? Oh, dear, how could this be only a dream? Could I have been dreaming ever since my early childhood? Am I only a dream I am dreaming about? Oh no, no. Something that hurts so much ... cannot be a dream only. But the other thing—that big bright I do not know what—cannot be a dream either.

on his attitude to his narrative:

és minden új részletet, ami eszembe jutott, lejegyeztem magamnak, unott dülöngő diákbetűimmal. [...] Pedig már elhitettem magammal, hogy nem restellek semmit. Hiszen legfeljebb azt álmodtam, hogy asztalosinas és törvénytelen gyerek vagyok.¹²⁹

He has lunch, and is present at the visit of the family doctor who tells him to read less and reassures him that he is well. Then a friend of the family comes. During his visit Elemér looks at his mother, and is shocked: 'Mert éppen a mozdulatban ráismertem arra ... arra a másikra ... arra, akit anyámnak kellett neveznem álmaim életében'.¹³⁰

Elemér soon feels unwell. He retires to his room and wants to go to sleep because the oneiric ego will have to get up early. He and what he experiences are shifted into the sphere of the oneiric dimension within one sentence: 'És alighogy behunytam a szememet, már éreztem, hogy a párna súrolja az arcom, éreztem, hogy az asztalosinas ágyában vagyok'.¹³¹ The oneiric alter ego goes to the city where a newspaper boy shouts out the fall of the government. He realises that he could also sell newspapers. He has no identification or papers to enable him to obtain a licence and stops longingly outside a bookshop but cannot read. He feels hungry, humiliated, miserable and frustrated. Finally he falls asleep in a park:

Kín, kín, irtózatoss kín volt így menni, a napban, porban füstben, izzadva, fáradva, éhesen. De mentem, mintha a jászolhoz mennék. Egy híd alatt mentem át, fölöttem a vasút bömbölt, pöfögött, a vashíd zúgott, mint egy pokol.¹³²

¹²⁹ *A gólyakalifa* (1982), p. 39. My translation: I noted down every new detail that occurred to me, in my bored schoolboy scrawl. [...] And yet I had almost made myself believe that I would not be ashamed of anything. After all, I could not have dreamt about less than having been a cabinet-maker's apprentice and an illegitimate child!

¹³⁰ *A gólyakalifa* (1982), p. 42. 'Because in this movement I suddenly recognized that...that other...that woman whom I had to call mother in the life of my dreams', *The Nightmare* (1966), p. 45.

¹³¹ *A gólyakalifa* (1982), p. 44. 'And hardly had I closed my eyes when I felt the pillow scraping against my cheek, I could feel that I was sleeping in the apprentice's bed', *The Nightmare* (1966), p. 47.

¹³² *A gólyakalifa* (1982), p. 47. 'It was agony, sheer tantalizing agony, to walk like this in the sun, dust and smoke, sweaty, tired and hungry. But I walked and walked, as if I were going to the manger. I passed under a bridge, above me a train puffed and panted and the iron bridge roared infernally', *The*

This part of Babits's novel transforms parts from *Oliver Twist*'s narrative:

Oliver walked twenty miles that day; and all that time tasted nothing but the crust of dry bread, and a few draughts of water, which he begged at the cottage-doors by the roadside.[...] Covered ways and yards, which here and there diverged from the main street, disclosed little knots of houses, where drunken men and women were positively wallowing in filth; [...].¹³³

Babits condenses and dramatises Dickens's depiction. His prose thereby acquires an emotional quality. This is unlike his precursor's realistic style. Babits writes about how his protagonist feels and not what he is deprived of. The repetition of 'menni' (go) in Babits parallels Dickens's 'covered ways and yards'. It is interesting to see how Babits varies from Dickens in expressing the same infernal qualities of his hero's environment by describing sounds rather than visuals.

After waking up, Elemér's main preoccupation is the coherence, the reality-like quality of his dream. He asks his Greek teacher, Darvas, for books on dreams. He gives Elemér *The Dissociation of a Personality*.¹³⁴ Elemér reads this book and becomes reassured of his mental health. By inserting an English intertext into his Hungarian prose, Babits also calls the reader's attention to one of his original sources.

This episode also shows Babits's way of creating his work. In the episode above, Darvas gives Elemér an English medical book. This book helps Elemér restore his confidence in his soundness. Babits also works from several English exemplars to create new Hungarian genres of fiction. *The Dissociation of a Personality* is a source he used when he wrote *A gólyakalifa*. ✓

Elemér tries to conceptualise his dream and decides to look upon it as a

Nightmare (1966), p. 51.

¹³³Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 55, 60.

¹³⁴Morton Prince, *The Dissociation of a Personality* (1906).

serialised novel. The next instalment of his dream, however, will not come and he remembers his dream in his fully conscious state as intensely as he does his memories. He is again his successful school self for some time and keeps going back to the mill to recall the episode of the kick. Visiting this location contains emblematic combinations of motifs from Elemér's dreams, real and oneiric memories and real experience. He carries on with his scientific inquiry into his dream, and he summarises his thesis as: 'Ez az élet csak alkalom arra, hogy a világ részben öntudatra jusson'.¹³⁵ The successful schoolboy begins to deteriorate. In his consciousness he experiences stories from the negative 'memory' manifestation of his self. First a schoolboy uses someone else's diploma to enrol; secondly he is at the inland revenue office, and thirdly the shy self has a lustful adventure with a prostitute. Elemér deems: 'hogy az álmom nem szűnt meg, csak valahogyan a tudatom alá került egy időre. Hogy az a sötét és nyomasztó *másik* élet most is itt húzódik valahol a hátam mögött, és kísér mint az árnyék, bár nem mindig látom'.¹³⁶ In this deliberation Babits utilises the text of *Oliver Twist*:

Although Oliver had roused himself from sleep, he was not thoroughly awake. There is a drowsy state, between sleeping and waking, when you dream more in five minutes with your eyes half open, and yourself half conscious of everything that is passing around you, than you would in five nights with your eyes fast closed, and your senses wrapt in perfect unconsciousness.¹³⁷

As opposed to Dickens Babits does not detail the difference between the perception of time while one is asleep, half asleep and awake but is preoccupied with the self's awareness of its own subconscious. However, seeing in Babits, is a metaphor of

¹³⁵ *A gólyakalifa*, (1982), p. 60. My translation: This life is merely an opportunity for the world to become partially conscious.

¹³⁶ *A gólyakalifa* (1982), p. 62. My translation: my dream has not ceased, but has temporarily sunk below my consciousness. That dark and oppressive *other* life still lurks somewhere behind my back. It follows me like a shadow which I cannot always see.

¹³⁷ *Oliver Twist*, p. 64.

consciousness. This also shows that he condenses and lyricises Dickens's more objective style.

1.6.2 Ruskin and Proust

After these episodes, Elemér travels to Venice with his grandmother and his fiancée, Etelka. The figure of Etelka is idyllically peaceful, unreal, and alludes to a similar character of the name Etelke in Sándor Petőfi's verse.¹³⁸

Elemér's and Etelka's visit to Venice focuses, inter alia, on their experience of the sea, the city as seen from a gondola,¹³⁹ and art. The narrator pays special attention to the St. Ursula frescos.¹⁴⁰ Elemér's impressions are interwoven with his childhood memories:

¹³⁸The young lady referred to here was called Etelka Csapó (1829-1845). See *Etelkéhez*, in *Petőfi Sándor összes költeményei*, ed. József Kiss, 2 vols. (Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1978), i, p. 318.

¹³⁹The narrator writes in the *Stones of Venice*: 'And now come with me, for I have kept you too long from your gondola: come with me on an autumnal morning, to a low wharf or quay at the extremity of a canal, with long steps on each side down to the water, which latter we fancy for an instant has become black with stagnation; another glance undeceives us—it is covered with the black boats of Venice'. See John Ruskin, *Stones of Venice* (London: Bellew, 1981), p. 52.

¹⁴⁰These passages show Babits's utilisation of Ruskin's attitudes and themes. On the basis of Hippolyte Taine's (1828-93) theory on *la race, le milieu, le moment* Babits supposes the same relationship between a country's landscape and its spirituality as Ruskin does in his *Poetry of Architecture*. Babits writes about Transdanubia: 'A Dunántúl enyhe kék vidék, hogy Ruskin egy szavával éljek, aki négyféle vidéktípust állapít meg s Itáliát kék vidéknek találja: a Dunántúl is kék vidék, hasonló legszebb részeiben Itáliához, Firenze környékéhez. Nem csoda ha a dunántúli írók állnak a latin könnyűséghez és eleganciához legközelebb'; 'Transdanubia is what Ruskin calls a mild blue region. Ruskin distinguishes between four different types of regions, and finds Italy blue. Transdanubia resembles Italy and the region of Florence in its most beautiful parts. It is no wonder that the Transdanubian writers stand closest to Latin lightness and elegance', Mihály Babits, 'Magyar irodalom' (1913), in Mihály Babits, *Esszék és tanulmányok*, 2 vols. (Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1978), i, p. 392. The original Ruskin text which Babits refers to reads as follows: '91. II. The cultivated, or blue, Country. This is the rich champagne land, in which large trees are more sparingly scattered, and which is chiefly devoted to the purposes of agriculture. In this we are perpetually getting blue distances from the slightest elevation, which are rendered more decidedly so by contrast with warm corn or ploughed fields in the foreground. Such is the greater part of England. The view from the hills of Malvern is a good example...', 'The Poetry of Architecture', *The Complete Works of John Ruskin*, ed. E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (London: Allen; New York: Longmans; Green, 1903-1912), i, *Early Prose Writings 1834 to 1843* (1903), pp. 70-1. It is interesting that Babits applies the colour of England to Italy and Transdanubia. Another explication of this theme and subject by Babits is in his short story *Útinapló*. In this work Babits refers to Ruskin's *Poetry of Architecture* as the starting point of his theory. See *Babits Mihály novellái és színjátékai*, ed. Anna Sándor Beliáné (Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1987), p. 25. (Babits had Ruskin's *Mornings in Florence* (Leipzig, 1907), *The Poetry of Architecture*, ill., author (Leipzig, 1907), *The Stones of Venice*, 3 vols. (London, n.d.) in his library.

És eszembe jutott a gyermekkorom csöndje, amikor még nem kiáltoztak lelkeemben azok a borzasztó, szégyenteljes piszkos emlékek. Mennyire elhalkultak ezek a lármás emlékek, mikor Etelka közelében voltam. Boldognak és gyermeknek éreztem magamat megint, mint azon az emlékezetes majálison, gyermekkorom utolsó tiszta napján.

Elemér also reflects on corruption in life; dream; and the beauty of art: ‘Mennyi szépség vesz körül. Milyen hálátlan is az ember: hogyha már semmi baja csinál magának, ha másból nem, hát egy rossz álomból’¹⁴¹. This style and these artistic images of Venice must have their genetic roots in Ruskin’s *The Stones of Venice*.¹⁴²

Critics often associate other works of Babits, particularly his *Halálfiái*, with Proust.¹⁴³ One must state that the bulk of Babits’s prose is nowhere close to the sophisticated introspection of Proust’s work. Despite its genetic disconnectedness this Italian part of *A gólyakalifa* does read like Proust. It achieves the subtle linking of positive emotions with art, artful nostalgia and environment such as one can find it in *Remembrance of Things Past*: ‘I went laboriously over [...] these visions of Florence, Venice, Pisa, from which the desire that they excited in me drew and kept something as profoundly personal as if it had been love, love for another person’.¹⁴⁴

Like Babits, Proust also takes up the motif of Vittore Carpaccio’s St. Ursula frescoes and the legend of St. Ursula in *In the Shadow of Young Girls in Flower*. As opposed to Proust’s use of Venice in *Swan’s Way*, Venice is here associated with the

¹⁴¹ *A gólyakalifa* (1982), p. 69. ‘There is so much beauty around me. How ungrateful Man is, where there is no trouble he makes it for himself—from a bad dream if there is nothing else’, *The Nightmare* (1966), p. 76.

¹⁴² The St. Ursula frescoes to which the narrator pays special attention in his description of Venice, were among Carpaccio’s principal works. Like Babits, Ruskin was also an admirer of Carpaccio: ‘the excellency and supremacy of five great painters, despised until I spoke of them,—Turner, Tintoret, Luini, Botticelli, and Carpaccio’, John Ruskin, *Modern Painters: Of the Imaginative and Theoretic Faculties*, ed. John Ruskin, 5 vols. (London: George Allen, 1897), ii, p. 255.

¹⁴³ ‘Meg az Ágoston-féle, a Zarathuszttra-típusú, a Proust-szerű erősen vallomásos, de erősen reflektált gondolati-érzelmi szövetű lírikus próza’, Béla G. Németh, *Babits a szabadító* (Budapest, Tankönyvkiadó, 1987), p. 25.

¹⁴⁴ Marcel Proust, *Swan’s Way: Book One of Remembrance of Things Past* (1922), trans. C. K. Scott Moncrieff (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2000), p. 455.

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idea of opulence rather than art and a peacefully beautiful environment.¹⁴⁵ Babits's and Proust's use of the same theme is evidence of their inner relatedness or psychological parallelism.¹⁴⁶ (It is unlikely to be a socially determined analogue because Ruskin was not a fashionable subject matter in Babits's Hungary.) A root the two writers have in common is Ruskin's *Stones of Venice* in this instance. Proust explicitly refers to this work as one his sources.¹⁴⁷

1.6.3 Dickens and Morton Prince

One night Elemér wakes up in his other life again. The story of the oneiric self continues where it left off last time. The reality of the oneiric world, as expressed in the themes and images of the text, becomes filthier, and the three corrupt real-life episodes, which took place before Elemér's trip to Venice, recur in this still Dickensian story. This part is also emblematic of the exploitation of the weak and powerless real self. The alter ego gets a job as a clerk. This is given to him by a court attendant who had caught him stealing the diploma he had wanted to use to prove his identity. He puts him in a post whose previous holder had committed suicide, takes a part of his pay, and blackmails him into continuing to forge fiscal stamps. In the words of the oneiric self: 'Igen, most már egészen tisztán értem ennek a napilapok riportjaiba való bűnügynek minden részét, melyet mint egy ködfejű bűnös áldozat némán szenvedtem át, és szenvedek máig'.¹⁴⁸ The description of this psychological

¹⁴⁵ Marcel Proust, *In the Shadow of Young Girls in Flower*, trans. James Grieve (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2003), pp. 475-76.

¹⁴⁶ Dionyz Durišin, *Sources and Systematics of Comparative Literature* (Bratislava: Univerzita Komenského, 1974), p. 169.

¹⁴⁷ Proust, *In the Shadow of Young Girls in Flower* (2003), p. 228.

¹⁴⁸ *A gólyakalifa* (1982), p. 78. 'Yes, I can fully understand now every detail of the whole business fit for the pen of sensation-mongering crime reporters, a business from which I dumbly suffered and am still suffering', *The Nightmare* (1966), p. 84.

phenomenon, according to which the ego suffers and then ideally overcomes the sins of the alter ego, has its theoretical origin in Prince's book:

Sally had been guilty of unusual offence. Miss Beauchamp had been put to mortification of learning that in a trance she had borrowed a large sum of money, had given forty dollars to a beggar, and then to cap the climax, had lost a treasured watch. The latter, as I learned, Sally had pulled to pieces,—‘It would be such fun to see if she could take the works out,’—and then, finding she was no watchmaker, she had hidden the pieces.¹⁴⁹

The oneiric self's memories of an ideally perfect young man merge with memories of Venice. This makes him feel frustrated and humiliated. Elemér hates his surroundings, and is also tortured by a sense of guilt because of the corruption he is involved in. The experience of guilt and humiliation is also narrated by the alter ego, partly because of the gradual unification of the consciousness of the two selves. The oneiric self's frustration at having to feel ashamed of his love of reading, and his memories of Venice, are only aggregating the existing chaos and confusion in Elemér's mind. The episode in another bookshop also shows the problems both selves face because of each other. The same motifs occur in the stories of all realities (real experience and memory, dreams and oneiric memories) here. Elemér day-dreams, and is taunted for day-dreaming by his colleagues. I will quote from Babits's text to illustrate the depiction of increasingly merging realities. The metaphorical description alludes to linguistic expression:

Emlékszem, hogy akkor édes régi álmom—(mert akkor ezt is álomnak kellett neveznem, éppen úgy, mint most amaszt)—, édes régi álmom aranykódéval, büszkeségével teli, borzasztóan, kínosan csúnyának éreztem a trágár beszédet, és egy pillanatig öntudatlan és önkénytelen, ilyenformán méltatlankodtam magamban.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹Morton Prince, *The Dissociation of a Personality* (1906), p. 138.

¹⁵⁰*A gólyakalifa* (1982), p. 73. ‘I remember that then, the golden mists of my old sweet dream still lingered in my mind and I still felt proud as in my old sweet dream (in *this* life I must refer to the other as a dream); their filthy language hurt and embarrassed me terribly’, *The Nightmare*, p. 78.

When Elemér wakes up, he realizes that all three realities have become increasingly inseparable. He loses control over the oneiric ego whose real unity with him is symbolized by the connection between the waking up and falling asleep of the two selves. This awkward experience launches Elemér's flight round Italy. The depiction of his journey becomes more and more frequently interrupted by episodes from the oneiric story-line. By this time the alter ego describes himself as: 'Vágyaim, telhetetlen és gyáva vágyaim uralkodtak rajtam, a gyűlölet, a gőg és durva érzékiség, az unalomnak és balga álmodozásnak gyermeke, melyet a legaljasabb és legolcsóbb rémregények, a mozidarabok és pornografikus nyomtatványok még tápláltak'.¹⁵¹

This description marks a break from the reformulated Dickensian story of the main self and the alter ego. In parallel with this, the ordinary-life self admits complete defeat. This is summarized in a metaphor which signifies increasing moral degradation in both narratives: 'És úgy éreztem, hogy most keveredik össze ez a két féle nedv. Eddig—eddig az arany bor felszínen úszott, és most, most kezd keveredni és szennyenedni'.¹⁵²

1.6.4 Morton Prince

The psychological content of the main ego's narrative is the despair he feels over the recurring oneiric story-line. He devises sophisticated philosophical systems to explain his situation, but cannot account for it coherently. His theories include having one

¹⁵¹ *A gólyakalifa* (1982), p. 83. 'My desires, my insatiable and cowardly desires, governed me, hatred, pride and coarse sensuality, children of boredom and stupid day-dreaming nurtured by the basest penny dreadful sensational films and pornographic magazines', *The Nightmare* (1966), p. 89.

¹⁵² *A gólyakalifa* (1982), p. 84. 'And I felt that now the two kinds of juices were being mixed. Up to now the golden wine had floated on the surface, but now it was getting mixed and polluted', *The Nightmare* (1966), p. 91. (I have amended the first sentence.)

soul which alternately lives in two bodies, or everyone having alter egos but no one meeting the others' alter egos. Elemér also becomes desperate to work out the language and the milieu of this other world. The emblem of the caliph recurs in his reflections, and the logic of his inquiries verges on the absurd: 'Ah, csak egy névre, csak egy szóra emlékeznék! Mindjárt meg tudnám mondani, hol van, hol van az álmaim országa a valóságban, mindjárt odautaznék, rajtakapnám a másik éneket, szembe állnánk, megtörne a varázs. Egy szót, csak egyetlen szót!'.¹⁵³ Morton Prince's book explains verbal confusions due to mental blocks in the subconscious:

The subconsciousness, so long as it is subconscious, has a much narrower field; it does not (except in crises) have control, for instance, of the arm and legs, or the speech faculties, and it is not possessed of the intellectual capacities which the subject in hypnosis possesses. When the subject is hypnotised and put into a particular state, the subconsciousness may become fused with this particular hypnotic consciousness, and, if so, its contents are remembered and the whole may then form an alternating personality.¹⁵⁴

Elemér justifies his state of mind by the night life of the alter ego which deprives him of his sleep and sanity: 'És még valami eszembe jutott. Az a sajátos megfelelés, amelybe álomom egyes alakjai az életem egyes alakjaival álltak. Az a nagy hasonlóság, az a rejtelmes érzés, hogy azok nem is hasonlóak, hanem ugyanazok'.¹⁵⁵

By the end of this section, the two selves' pursuit of each other becomes nearly unbearable for the protagonist. The principal self and its interrelated subconscious in the matter of dreams and perception of sleep are explained by Morton Prince:

¹⁵³ *A gólyakalifa* (1982), p. 87. 'Oh, if I could recall a single name, a single word! I could tell then right away where 'the country of my dreams' was in reality, I would travel there and catch my other ego in the act, we would stand face to face and the magic would be broken. A word, a single word', *The Nightmare* (1966), p. 94.

¹⁵⁴ Morton Prince, *The Dissociation of a Personality* (1906), pp. 45-46.

¹⁵⁵ *A gólyakalifa* (1982), p. 88. My translation: And then something else occurred to me: the particular correspondence which existed between the particular characters of my dream and my life, and the unmistakable similarity and mysterious feeling that they are not only similar but the same.

Sally *claims never to sleep*, but it is very unlikely that this is an illusion on her part. She claims to know the dreams of Miss Beauchamp to the minutest detail, including those dreams which are not remembered on waking, and the external agencies, such as sounds in the street, which give rise to them. By comparing Sally's statements with those of Miss Beauchamp it is possible to verify Sally's claim in regard to the dreams which Miss Beauchamp remembers, but, of course, these dreams Sally would be expected to know, whether she slept or not. More interesting is the fact that this subconscious personality insists that there are many dreams which Miss Beauchamp does not remember on waking, and which she Sally, claims to be conscious of and remember. These dreams are more extensive than those that are remembered.¹⁵⁶

The oneiric alter ego in Babits's work is one embodiment of the subconscious:

A díjnok érezte Tábornak Elemér új napjainak tarkaságát, érezte és vágyak keltek

benne, új vágyak új gyötrelmekkel, vágyak a látásra, tarkaságra.¹⁵⁷

Now the alter ego seeks money to fulfil his craving for a glamorous life. The idea of this lifestyle has its origin in the main self.

1.6.5 *The Picture of Dorian Gray*¹⁵⁸

Despite the narrator's announcement, the next section, which is the last part of the flight, starts more in the style of Oscar Wilde's *Dorian Gray* than a cheap novel. It contains several reworked intertexts from Wilde. A strong parallel exists between

¹⁵⁶Morton Prince, *The Dissociation of a Personality* (1906), p. 153. (Sally is one variation of Miss B.'s subconscious.) See also *ibid.*, p. 169: 'I made her stay awake all last night, and I will to-night, and I will every night. [...] I tried to cut her hair the other day, but she woke up before I could do it'. An analytical description of the sub-consciousness's ability of recalling and reconstructing previously discontinued dreams can be read in *ibid.*, pp. 326-27.

¹⁵⁷*A gólyakalifa* (1982), p. 89. 'The clerk sensed the new splendour of Elemér Tábornak's days; he sensed it and it awakened in him new desires, new desires with new torments, desires to see, to live colourfully', *The Nightmare* (1966), p. 96.

¹⁵⁸Babits read *The Picture of Dorian Gray* before writing *A gólyakalifa*. He writes about Wilde's novel: 'A krisztusi orosz mellé vegyünk egy individuális bűnös, börtönjárt perverz dekadens: Gray Dorian arcképe szintén éppen egy ily anyámasszonyos lelkiismeret allegóriája', 'In contrast to the Christ-like Russian, let us take a singular perverse and decadent criminal, a former prisoner; *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is a parable of a likewise cowardly conscience', *Esszék és tanulmányok* (1978), i, p. 795. Babits read Wilde's works; translated many of his verses and the 'Duchess of Padua'. According to István Gál, 'A szekszárdi vakációban már fordított tőle, összes műveinek birtokában volt, sőt még magyar fordításait is beszerezte'; 'During his holidays in Szekszárd, he was already translating from him, and possessed his complete works; what's more he has even obtained Wilde's Hungarian translations', István Gál, *Babits és az angol irodalom* (Debrecen: A Tisza István-Tudományegyetem angol szemináriuma, 1942), p. 44.

Elemér and a character from a book with whom Dorian identifies: 'The hero the wonderful young Parisian, in whom the romantic and the scientific temperaments were so strangely blended, became a kind of prefiguring type of himself to him'.¹⁵⁹ The final stage of Elemér's flight resembles the complete corruption of Dorian's ego.

Dorian's story is inspired by a 'novel without a plot'¹⁶⁰ which was also inspired by another book, the 'Satyricon'.¹⁶¹ The ideals of the novel given to Dorian by Henry¹⁶² do not only impress Dorian but are also responsible for Dorian's moral corruption. Sylvia's adjective in *A gólyakalifa* is 'valóban sphinx volt titok nélkül, medalion, ereklje nélkül'.¹⁶³ The sphinx without a secret is a common image with Wilde, and is also used in Dorian's conversation with Lady Narborough: "Describe us as a sex," was her challenge. "Sphinxes without secrets".¹⁶⁴

Elemér's corruption in *A gólyakalifa* is manifested in the same way as Dorian's. Elemér plays roulette, enjoys vaudeville, gives money to a beautiful, tall French woman. He takes up with Sylvia, who desperately wants money. He squanders all his money on her so that she might help him stay awake and thus save him from his bad dreams. Despite these efforts, Elemér completely loses control of himself:

Pedig talán már nem is voltam az, sehol sem voltam az, már Elemér sem volt a régi Elemér. Ez a sápadt ifjú, aki hosszú estéken át szórta a pénzt a svájci világfürdők játékasztalaira egy kokott kedvéért, nem volt többé a kedves jó fiú,¹⁶⁵

Like the last attempt Dorian makes to be kind to Hetty, Elemér decides to turn

¹⁵⁹Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), p. 141.

¹⁶⁰Ibid., p. 139.

¹⁶¹Ibid., p. 144.

¹⁶²Ibid., (1985), p. 138.

¹⁶³*The Nightmare* (1966), p. 99. 'a sphinx without secret, a locket without a memento', *A gólyakalifa* (1982), p. 92.

¹⁶⁴Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1985), p. 217.

¹⁶⁵*A gólyakalifa* (1982), pp. 92-93. 'And yet perhaps I wasn't what I used to be anywhere now; not even Elemér was the same Elemér. This pale young man who frittered away his money during the long gambling nights on the gambling tables of the famous Swiss resorts for the sake of a *cocotte* was no longer the dear sweet boy', *The Nightmare* (1966), p. 100.

back and change himself for the better. He travels by train and boat, chased not only by his negative self and by the dreams about his oneiric ego, but also by Sylvia. At this stage the oneiric story becomes more and more interwoven with that of the real self. The description of the alter ego's surroundings continue to evoke scenes from *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. The depiction of human behaviour is, as in parts of *Dorian Gray*, expressionistic¹⁶⁶: 'A tanyában nagy ének volt és röhögés a gazda disznó anekdotáin. A szivarfüstöt vágni lehetett. Az arcok vörösek voltak, a hosszú nyakú, pápaszemes kolléga kidagadt erekkel ordított'.¹⁶⁷

At this stage of his flight, Elemér starts perceiving even present reality as his dream: 'Ekkor megismertem Silviát. Ő volt a vörös kaszírosnő, a disznó díjnoknak, legmagasabb, legelérhetetlenebb vágya! Ő, de ott még sokkal olcsóbb, sokkal utálatosabb'.¹⁶⁸

The Expressionism that is characteristic of Elemér's description of himself during his sea journey is stronger than in Wilde's:

A mal di mare leírhatatlan rossz érzései fogtak el. Körülöttem nyögések, sóhajtások hallatszottak. Künn a víz zúgott, és a szél süvített félelmetesen. A hajó dőlt jobbra-balra, támoalgó alakok táncoltak, kapaszkodtak. Meggyötrött nők, férfiak heverték szerteszét, hason és hátán összevissza, senki sem törődött társaival, senki sem nézte ki a szomszédja.¹⁶⁹

Babits's intertext here is undoubtedly from Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient*

¹⁶⁶the Expressionists considered that 'a new passion was needed, a new pathos, the expression of a subjective vision regardless of mimesis', Radojka Miljevic, *Notions of Identity in the Work of Egon Hostovsky* (2000), pp. 54-55.

¹⁶⁷*A gólyakalifa* (1982), p. 95. 'the guests were roaring with laughter at their host's dirty stories. Stale cigar smoke pervaded the room. Faces were crimson, and the long-necked colleague with the spectacles was shouting, his veins swollen', *The Nightmare* (1966), p. 102.

¹⁶⁸*A gólyakalifa* (1982), p. 94. 'Then I recognized Sylvia. She was the red-haired cashier girl, the highest, the least attainable desire of that swine clerk! She, but even cheaper, even more degraded', *The Nightmare* (1966), p. 101.

¹⁶⁹*A gólyakalifa* (1982), p. 96. 'The indescribably ghastly sensations of seasickness overcame me. All around me I heard groans and sighs. Outside the water surged and the wind roared frighteningly. The ship reeled right and left, swaying figures tottered and grabbed at anything in reach. Tormented men and women lay on their backs and on their stomachs, scattered all over the place, no one cared about the other, no one looked to see who their neighbour was', *The Nightmare* (1966), p. 104.

Mariner.¹⁷⁰ The lines 320-330 from the fifth part are part and parcel of the Babits

extract above:

The wind reach'd the ship: it roar'd / And dropp'd down, like a stone! / Beneath the lightning and the moon / The dead men gave a groan. / They groan'd, they stirr'd, they all uprose, / Ne spake, ne mov'd their eyes: / It had been strange, even in a dream / To have seen those dead men rise.¹⁷¹

Here, Babits transposes Coleridge's strongly expressionistic lines of verse into prose.

In contrast to perceiving his present reality as a dream, the increasing interrelatedness of the wakeful and the oneiric ego is frequently emphasized by the protagonist. The purpose of this is to remind the reader of what originally used to be the oneiric story. These comments are woven into the travel descriptions. The description of the train journey is one example of this device: 'A vonat ringása hamar elszenderített, pedig nem is váltottam hálókocsit. Ezúttal a díjnok pontosan kelt, csak a hivatalban bóbiskolt el minduntalan. (Ez onnan volt, hogy Elemér az állomáson felébredt)'.¹⁷²

Arriving in Budapest, Elemér is desperate to work his way out of his troublesome state but fails. As a result he subsists in an inane day-dream. The alter ego is being made increasingly miserable, and devises wicked plans in wine-sodden fantasies. Now Elemér states that his true life is the one the clerk experiences, and his own life was only a dream. By the time he meets Sylvia in the cabaret, his two selves

¹⁷⁰See also 'Don Juan', canto ii., lxxii, in George Gordon Byron, *Byron Poetic Works*, ed. Frederick Page (London; Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1974). The crew suffers from drought in Coleridge's and Byron's verse and a storm in Babits's novel. Babits's use of sea imagery and his description of the state of the crew, nevertheless, imitates the verses of these English poets.

¹⁷¹I quote from the 1798 version. See Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Poems* (London; Vermont: J. M. Dent; Charles E. Tuttle, 1995), p. 234. Babits had Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* (London, 1906), *Essays and Lectures on Shakespeare* (London: 1930), *Poems*, ed. Edward Dowden, ill., Charles Pens, Edinburgh, n.d.).

¹⁷²*A gólyakalifa* (1982), p. 94. 'Although I had bought a Pullman ticket the rolling of the train lulled me to sleep. For once the clerk got up in time, but kept snoozing in the office. (This was because Elemér woke up at the stations)', *The Nightmare* (1966), p. 101.

will have merged completely. He watches the show, and according to his perception, the show merges with the erotic fantasies of a half conscious state:

Villogott előttem a táncosnő meztelen térde, fehér combja-húsa—de a következő pillanatban már a miniszter arcképére emeltem fel álmos szememet. A két énem ilyenkor úgyszólván teljesen együtt volt, egyik sem aludt egészen, és egyik sem volt ébren egészen, mindkettő félálomban mímelte az ébrenlétet, vagy inkább pillanatonként váltották egymást.¹⁷³

The characteristics of the show and its perception draw on Wilde's depiction of night-life:

Dorian winced, and looked round at the grotesque things that lay in such fantastic postures on ragged mattresses. The twisted limbs, the gaping mouths, the staring lustreless eyes, fascinated him. [...] They were better off than he was. He was prisoned in thought. Memory, like a horrible memory, was eating his soul away. [...] He wanted to escape from himself.¹⁷⁴

The creation of the narrative becomes entangled into a mixture of perception, analysis and experience which culminates in the personality's collapse.

1.6.6 Virgil, Poe and Wilde: Conclusion

In the next and final part, Elemér finds himself at home. He is back in the idyllic world of his family and country-side: 'A vonat halk fütttyel átsurrant a Sárvíz szürke hídján. A víz elmarad veszteglő tutajjaival. Jönnek már a mi szőlőhegyeink, az ismerős, édes sziluett az alkonyi égen'.¹⁷⁵

One lyric root here is Croydon's pleading with Alexis in the second of Virgil's *Eclogues*: 'How wonderful it would be to live together in these / Rough fields, in

¹⁷³ *A gólyakalifa* (1982), p. 100. 'The nakedness of the dancer, the white flesh of her thigh flashed in front of me—and the next moment I was raising my eyes heavy with sleep to look at the ex minister's portrait in the office. At such times my two egos were almost in complete union, neither of them completely asleep and neither of them completely awake, both of them pretending to a waking state while half asleep, or rather the two alternating from one moment to the next', *The Nightmare* (1966), p. 108.

¹⁷⁴ Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1985), p. 206.

¹⁷⁵ *A gólyakalifa* (1982), p. 104. 'With a gentle whistle the train crossed the grey bridge over the River Sárköz. The stream with its idle rafts was left behind and we were approaching our own rolling vineyards, those sweetly familiar silhouettes against the darkening sky', *The Nightmare* (1966), p. 112.

homely cottage, hunting the deer with our / Bows'.¹⁷⁶

Elemér's return home from a state of lost innocence is depicted as:

'Diadalmenetben tér meg a tékozló fiú'.¹⁷⁷ and contrasts with the idyllic environment of his home. From the point of view of Elemér's educational process, this part could constitute a stage of regained innocence but it turns into its opposite. This idyll is only temporally lasting until Elemér proposes to Etelka. He is talking about Etelka, when his dream overtakes him. In the escapades of his oneiric self the clerk becomes desperate and breaks loose completely.

The images and motifs of the stories of the two selves merge while the two narratives become intertwined. The protagonist loses his self-command completely:

Iszonyatos felfedezést tettem. A vér megfagy az ereimben, ha rágondolok. Az ideges, vézna teremtés, aki újabban a kis kávéház pénztáránál ül, az ideges vézna teremtés—jaj, hogyan tudjam ezt leírni?—Etelkára hasonlít! Itt van, leírtam végre: Etelkára hasonlít. Ó Etelka bocsáss meg, bocsáss meg! Szédül a fejem, nem tudok gondolkozni, meg kell örülnöm.¹⁷⁸

The ellipsis at the ravings of the narrative selves and the grammatically incoherent speech represent the mind's loss of control. The stops and starts in the wording and syntax are thus emblematic of Elemér's present state of complete confusion.

The clerk's story is carried on in the meanwhile. Due to his anticipated fancy of the disclosure of his crime, he betrays himself to a law student to whom he has always felt inferior (another variation of Elemér's own original ideal in the mind).

¹⁷⁶Virgil, *The Eclogues The Georgics*, trans. C. S. Lewis (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 8-9.

¹⁷⁷*A gólyakalifa* (1982), p. 104. 'the triumphant return of the prodigal son', *The Nightmare* (1966), p. 113.

¹⁷⁸*A gólyakalifa* (1982), p. 108. 'I've made a dreadful discovery, the blood curdles in my vein when I think of it. The nervous girl who has recently sat by the cash-desk in the little café, that nervous scrawny little person—oh, how am I to put it on paper?—looks like Etelka. Here it is, I've put it down: she looks like Etelka. Oh, Etelka, forgive me, forgive me! I feel dizzy, I can't think, I am going mad', *The Nightmare* (1966), p. 116. (I have amended the final sentence of this passage).

The clerk gets three days to put the money back, since part of his argument is that he has 'a mother to think of' who would not like to lose him.

During his final three days, the clerk is desperate and struggles to save himself. Only the archetypal image of Elemér restrains him from killing himself. Both selves and their dreams are present in the staccato text. His feigned will contains references to questions of prose writing. This device has its roots both in Poe and Stevenson: 'Alszik, alszik a díjnok egész nap—tud aludni! és én egész éjjel rendezem ezeket a rendezetlen írásokat, mint egy öngyilkosjelölt, mint egy végrendelkező. Kinek a számára? Azt fogják mondani: egy őrült írásai. Mindegy: most már leírom ezt is, a legborzasztóbbat, bármily önkínzás is'.¹⁷⁹

Meanwhile the clerk goes to a café. Here he is mistaken for a doctor and drinks tea as one self and champagne as another. He picks up a prostitute whom he identifies with his innocent fiancée and kills her in a seedy hotel. At this point Elemér thinks he has murdered Etelka: 'megfojtottam azt, aki—lám, lám, gondolkozzunk csak, az arcára, a rendes arcára nem emlékszem, [...] Mikor... mikor megszorítottam, akkor olyan kéj futott át rajtam... olyan kéj volt... Istenem, ha Etelkát öltem volna meg!'.¹⁸⁰ He tells Etelka about the Stork-caliph and following Etelka's innocent advice according to which the clerk must shoot himself, he will die in much the same way as the protagonist in *William Wilson*. As in Poe's novel, no palpable evidence (the revolver) is found on the location after Elemér's death.

¹⁷⁹ *A gólyakalifa* (1982), pp. 114-15. 'The clerk is asleep, asleep all day long—he is able to sleep!—and all night long I have been putting these confused notes into order as a man who is going to commit suicide would make his will. For whom? It will be said that they are the writings of a madman. It does not matter, now that I have started, I am going to describe this, too, the greatest horror of all, whatever anguish it causes me', *The Nightmare* (1966), p. 124.

¹⁸⁰ *A gólyakalifa* (1982), p. 124. 'I had strangled her who, let's just think a minute, her face, her face I cannot recall, [...] When I...when I squeezed it, I had felt such ecstasy...it was such ecstasy...My God, if I had killed Etelka!', *The Nightmare* (1966), p. 132.

The mind's failure and the murder within the pornographic episodes are also transformations of themes from Poe. The tapestries and cold walls originate in *Ligea*. The violence with which the murder of the prostitute is executed is a transposition of the criminal acts of *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*:

Az első pillanatban az ágy falára néztem, és íme, egy szép, meleg mintás ágyvédő, a húgom kézimunkája borította a falat. És akkor egyszerre, mintha látnám, szemem előtt volt egy másik, egy hideg kemény ágyfal, egy krétafehér fej a falhoz támasztva függélyesen, élettelen, keresztben elnyúló női test az ágyon, levegőbe lógó cipős női lábak.¹⁸¹

One must add that the same type of interior description can be found in *The Arabian Nights*, which surely inspired both Babits and Poe, and Babits through Poe: 'The palace was furnished with silk carpets and leather mats and hung with drapes'.¹⁸²

Etelka's innocent intervention puts an end to the crazy narrative. The dialogue between her and Elemér diverts the course of the narrative temporarily. Elemér's imparting of his dream to Etelka, begins a new way of speaking:

'a meztelenség kéje, a vallomás kéje'.¹⁸³ Confessions always imply innocence. After Etelka's genuinely innocent reassurance: '—Álom volt minden—mondta—, ez csak álom, álom az egész'.¹⁸⁴ Elemér decides that the clerk will commit suicide:

'Ma a díjnok megöli magát'.¹⁸⁵

As Etelka and Elemér's dialogue continues, the speakers lose their distinctness, and the dialogue turns entirely into a monologue in Elemér's mind. By

¹⁸¹ *A gólyakalifa*, p. 123. 'As I woke up, my first glance fell on the wall by the bed, and behold, a fine, lovely-patterned counterpane, my sister's handiwork, covered the wall. And then, all of a sudden, as if I saw it, another wall, a cold and hard wall, was before my eyes, a chalk-white head leaning upright against the wall, a lifeless female body on the bed, and shoes dangling in the air', *The Nightmare* (1966), p. 131.

¹⁸² *The Arabian Nights*, ed. Muhsin Mahdi, trans. Husain Haddawy (London; New York: Norton, 1992), p. 54.

¹⁸³ *A gólyakalifa* (1982), p. 126. 'the pleasure of nakedness, the pleasure of confession', *The Nightmare* (1966), p. 135.

¹⁸⁴ *A gólyakalifa* (1982), p. 127. 'It was a dream, all of it was only a dream', *The Nightmare* (1966), p. 135.

¹⁸⁵ *A gólyakalifa* (1982), p. 128. 'Today the clerk will kill himself', *The Nightmare* (1966), p. 136.

the time his narration reaches the decision of suicide, the clerk will be referred to as a third person by the confused or annihilated personality. The final disintegration of the personality represents the impossibility of a positive educational process. With the murder (death) of the only narrated or written personalities, the narrator dies, and it will not be possible for him to finish the novel.

Before concluding one must observe that Babits's novel transposes operations of disorders from Morton Prince's book. While in *The Dissociation of a Personality* the variations of the main self affect and correct each other, the ultimate correction does not happen in Babits's fiction. Instead of recovery, Elemér's originally main self disintegrates under the pressure of its alter ego. This process leads to the death of the creative main self.¹⁸⁶

The appended letter, which was originally addressed to a particular person, underlies the importance of the narrative as one of the principal themes of the novel. The editor reminds his friend of the story and the sensation the story made in the newspapers three years earlier. He wants to wait for the sensation to die down before publishing the manuscript. The reference to the sensational newspaper origin of stories alludes not only to Poe (e.g. *Rue Morgue*), but also to Stevenson and Oscar Wilde. The intention of the editor here is to take the story out of the sphere of sensationalism so that the reader can read it with interest and sympathy.

The letter itself also has genetic roots in Poe and Stevenson. It is a standard

¹⁸⁶ A root of the process that Babits's story describes is the personality's responsibility or guilt. Acute responsibility or guilt can be the consequence of the personality's abuse in childhood. These two consequential feelings can cause people to long to behave differently from what they are really like, and to develop distinct identities or personality states. These are the 'alters' or alter egos, and can recurrently take control of a person's behaviour. Amnesia is a feature of this disorder. It prevails when the host self clashes with the alter states. (It is part of a defence mechanism.) Self-attack can be a bad manifestation of this. Should one read it carefully, Babits's story is colourful elaboration of this clinical case. A detailed explanation can be found in Raj Persaud, *From the Edge of the Couch* (2004), pp. 400-09, 417.

device in Poe that the editor appends a letter about the circumstances under which the manuscript was found. Examples of this are *Ms. Found in a Bottle*, *The Adventure of Hans Fall* or the *Narrative of A. Gordon Pym*. In his last novel Babits utilises, again, not only the narrative devices but also the themes of these works by Poe. In Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* there is not a separate letter to state that an editor publishes another author's narrative, but the same message is imparted in the different letters and wills left to Utterson. In Stevenson the narrator is the detective, and in the process of his narration he shows how the novel has been compiled from the different stories. The existence of all the editors in Poe, Stevenson and Babits serve the purpose of making the narrative credible and relevant. The disappearance of the weapon together with other fantastic elements of the stories in both Poe's and Babits's work oppose the laws of reality. This improbability, coupled with the credibility of the editor, places a strong emphasis on the importance of the creative narrative in both writers.

This type of many-sided function and psychologically layered use of the narrative was unprecedented before Babits in Hungarian literature. Babits utilised his English sources to write his version of a modernist psychologically focussed narrative.

Kártyavár (1915-1923)| CHAPTER 2

2.1 Contents	67
2.2 A brief introduction into the secondary literature on the novel	68
2.3 Main features of <i>Kártyavár</i> and their genetic roots in Dickens	71
2.3.1 Narration	71
2.3.2 Narrative style and subtexts	71
2.3.3 Characters	73
2.3.4 Descriptions of themes	76
2.3.5 Genre	78
2.4 A close analysis of the text	80
2.4.1 Babits's transposition of the beginning of <i>Bleak House</i> in <i>Kártyavár</i>	80
2.4.2 <i>Kártyavár</i> 's story and its circumstances	83
2.5 Heroism and predestination - history and place	106
2.6 The closing of <i>Kártyavár</i>	110
2.7 Conclusion	114

2.2 A brief introduction into the secondary literature on the novel

Such as *A gólyakalifa*, this novel is an experiment in creating something new in Hungarian literature. It is not as original as *A gólyakalifa* but has many novel features. Two of these are its densely metaphorical prose which is crammed with intertexts and its satirical ending. Settings and landscapes acquire different meanings in it than the ones in *A gólyakalifa*. While the dirty workshop, filthy town scenes and the idylls of the Trans-Danubian countryside were emblematic of the protagonist's state of mind in *A gólyakalifa*, the settings of dirty landscapes in *Kártyavár* signify the town's state of chaos and corruption.

Kártyavár has little secondary literature on it and even less that concerns its English sources. It is generally unappreciated. One reason for this is that most Hungarian readers are unacquainted with its meaningful intertexts and are unable to unravel its strongly dialogic¹⁸⁷ and often double-voiced narrative (heteroglossia).¹⁸⁸

Aladár Schöpfung (1924) mentions Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*. His two observations are that, much like *Vanity Fair*, *Kártyavár* is a novel without heroes. It likewise finishes with a scene in which certain characters appear to become puppets in a dance-macabre.¹⁸⁹ The same point is made by Tivadar Rédey (1924)¹⁹⁰, Pál Kardos (1972) and György Rába (1983) in their biographies¹⁹¹ of Babits. Both of these observations are correct but these two phenomena above are parts of a wider subject

¹⁸⁷ 'Bakhtin's dialogic vision of human consciousness, subjectivity and communication is based, then, on a vision in which language embodies an on-going ideological clash of ideologies, world-views, opinions and interpretations', Graham Allen, *Intertextuality* (New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 28.

¹⁸⁸ "It serves two speakers at the same time and expresses simultaneously two different intentions: the direct intention of the character who is speaking, and the refracted intention of the author. In such discourses there are two voices, two meanings and two expressions" (1981:324). Ibid., p. 29.

¹⁸⁹ Aladár Schöpfung, 'Kártyavár', *Nyugat*, 3 (1924) (p. 509).

¹⁹⁰ Tivadar Rédey, 'Babits Mihály Kártyavár', *Napkelet*, 5 (1924), 465-68.

¹⁹¹ György Rába, *Babits Mihály* (Budapest: Gondolat, 1983), p. 129.; Pál Kardos, *Babits Mihály* (Budapest: Gondolat, 1972), p. 327.

matter.

Péter Pósa (1956) wrote a book comparing the characters of *Vanity Fair* and *Kártyavár*.¹⁹² He claims that both novels aim at a social panorama and that both Thackeray and Babits are prejudiced against the working class.¹⁹³ Pósa ignores the many meanings of the story and the characters' function in it. One must add that Dickens¹⁹⁴ also describes workers and society in his novels.¹⁹⁵ *Hard Times* contains many descriptions on this subject. Angus Wilson details the background and the circumstances of the writing of *Bleak House* and *Hard Times*:

And to sharpen his vision his journalist's instinct was aroused by a long—drawn—out battle of strike and lockout that had been fought in Preston between owners and workers in the cotton mills for twenty-three weeks. In 1854 he made a visit to Lancashire to see the battle for himself. In April appeared the first number of *Hard Times*.¹⁹⁶

Babits's views of the potentially detrimental nature of the public demonstrations of workers and his endeavour to encourage the education of people were in parallel with Dickens's.¹⁹⁷ In *Kártyavár* Babits expresses his views by showing how unrealistic and dishonest behaviour can lead to a society's disintegration.

¹⁹²Pósa Péter, *Babits Mihály: 'Kártyavár'* (Szeged, 1956).

¹⁹³Ibid., p. 17.

¹⁹⁴Dickens and Thackeray were both journalists with an interest in public affairs. This is a fact Babits was also aware of. He mentions it in *Az európai irodalom története* (Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1979), p. 385.

¹⁹⁵Walter Bagehot [...] summed up the matter best: 'He describes London like a special correspondent for posterity. This is the most apt of comments. In his journalism Dickens combined knowledge with wit and an unsurpassed imagination, and he created scenes and characters in the most authentic manner', *Charles Dickens, A December Vision: His Social Journalism*, ed. Neil Philip and Victor Newburg (London: Collins, 1986), p. 17.

¹⁹⁶Angus Wilson, *The World of Dickens* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), pp. 19-93.

¹⁹⁷Babits wrote *Május Huszonhárom Rákospalotán* (1912) to state his views on a workers' demonstration which took place in Rákospalota; where he lived at the time. Babits was dissatisfied with his contemporary society but he disliked revolutions. Here his attitude resembles Dickens's. 'But it is hard to see such a contempt—and despair with the legal system evidenced in *Bleak House* and often aired in *Household Words*—could lead, save to a desire to see "the People governed" defy the insolence of power, and seize control of their destinies. Dickens came sometimes perilously close to such a view. But all his instincts were against it', *Charles Dickens, A December Vision* (1986), p. 19.

Babits began to publish *Kártyavár* in *Nyugat* in 1915. He planned to publish his whole novel in serial form. His models for a serialised novel were the works of Mór Jókai (1825-1904)¹⁹⁸ and Charles Dickens. István Sötér (1983) only mentions Dickens in connection with descriptions of poverty in Babits's work: 'A nyomor bemutatása dickensi sémákba szorul'.¹⁹⁹ Sötér's exceptional position shows that Hungarian critics mostly ignore Dickens despite the fact that he is a main narrative model and intertextual source of *Kártyavár*. Babits himself calls the reader's attention to this fact. He stopped writing this book in January 1916. He summarised his exemplars of writing in his apology published in *Nyugat*:

Az olvasó, mikor valamely folyóiratban egy regény olvasásához kezd, úgy tekint arra, mint kész műre: a valóság azonban, hogy az csak a legritkább esetben kész ilyenkor. Az ilyen nagy terjedelmű és széles cselekvésű műveknek szinte a lényegéhez tartozik, hogy úgyszólván a közönség előtt készülnek: és ez a műfaj megalapítói óta mindmáig legtöbbször így is volt. Így csinálta Dickens, így Jókai: a ma írójának sem kell ezt szégyellnie.²⁰⁰

In the light of this reference and further allusions to Dickens in Babits's theoretical works, I will focus on the way Babits utilised especially *Hard Times* and *Bleak House* in *Kártyavár*.

¹⁹⁸ Mór Jókai's art were immensely popular and created a wide reading public in Hungary. They have a folklore basis. They do not aim at social criticism, and place their emphasis on the story.

¹⁹⁹ 'The description of poverty is crammed into schematic Dickensian patterns', István Sötér, 'Babits Mihály a regényíró', *Új Írás*, 11 (1983), 35-43 (p. 38).

²⁰⁰ 'Whenever the reader starts reading a novel in some periodical, he usually regards it as if it were finished. The fact is, that it is hardly ever finished at this stage. It is almost the essence of the scope and breadth of the action of a work of this magnitude that it is, so to speak, being written in the presence of the audience. This has most often been the case ever since the foundation of serialised fiction. This is how Dickens and Jókai did it, so not even today's writers must feel ashamed of it', Mihály Babits, *Itt a halk és komoly beszéd ideje* ed. János Téglás (Celldömölk: Pazu; Westermann, 1997), p. 25.

2.3 Main features of *Kártyavár* and their genetic roots in Dickens

2.3.1 Narration

Babits's imitation of Dickens's art is manifest in the way of narration. Omniscient narration and interior monologues (sometimes in plural such as in the introduction) make up the tales of *Kártyavár*. Omniscient narrative and Esther Summerson's narrative create the story in *Bleak House*. Omniscience here, such as in Babits's novel, is only a formal characteristic. Neither *Kártyavár* nor its major root have omniscient narratives in the way they build up their multiple levels of meanings. Emotional attitudes and points of views are expressed in a complex manner. The characters' monologues and dialogues often blend with the narrator's point of view. This creates this novel's heteroglossia and dialogic quality.²⁰¹ The use of reported monologue and abundant dialogue is manipulated by the narrators. This results in the complexity and sometimes detachment with which both authors express themselves. Graham Allen writes the following about this type of narration: 'Dickens's *Bleak House*, to take one example, is concerned not to comment upon but to present each character's discursive position.[...] Even the third person narrator, has idiosyncratic opinions, gets angry, sides with some issues and rejects others, uses distinct images and turns of phrase'.²⁰²

2.3.2 Narrative style and subtexts

Babits's hypertextual transposition²⁰³ of Dickens's text is explicitly manifested in his

²⁰¹ As Bakhtin states :“dialogic relationships can permeate inside the utterance, even inside the individual word, as long as two voices collide within it dialogically” (1984a:184)', Allen, *Intertextuality* (2005), pp. 24-25.

²⁰² Ibid., pp. 23-24.

²⁰³ Allen, *Intertextuality* (2005), p. 109.

intertextual motifs and metaphors that originate in Dickens. These give Babits's narrative many meanings because they carry a wide range of modified horizontal and vertical dimensions²⁰⁴ in their new environment. The best example of this phenomenon is Babits's metaphorical depictions of characters and environment.

The sustained metaphors and other tropes which often form subtexts in *Kártyavár* have their roots partly in *Bleak House*. The subtexts and their network of tropes create a frame of referentiality and comment on the main text just like in *Bleak House*.²⁰⁵ Babits does not only copy this device but also transforms Dickensian themes in many of his subtexts. Michael Riffaterre maintains that these intertextual subtexts are the unconscious of the main texts: 'the intertext of the narrative acts as the unconscious of fiction and that readers recover or discover that intertext because the narrative itself contains clues leading back to it'.²⁰⁶ Babits's mixture of satirical, comic, melodramatic and grotesque episodes in *Kártyavár* also have genetic roots in Dickens's novels. These varied insets create detachment between the reality of the whole text and the reader. They also strengthen the enigmatic quality of the novel's protagonists because they distance them from the reader's perception through an only indirectly decodable depiction of reality. W. J. Harvey's view of *Hard Times* also applies to *Kártyavár*:

its major concerns are repeated and echoed in a different key; its abundance of doubling, paralleling, contrasting, this constant modulation from sinister to pathetic or comic, serves to create a density of life providing a context for those vivid scenes of episodic intensification. We accept these, take them on trust as more than brilliant but isolated moments, because we know they mesh with that complicated web of human

²⁰⁴ 'In the horizontal dimension "the word in the text belongs to both writing subject and addressee"; in the vertical dimension "the word in the text is oriented toward an anterior or synchronic literary corpus" (Kristeva, 1980: 66)', Allen, *Intertextuality* (2005), p. 39.

²⁰⁵ Michael Riffaterre, *Fictional Truth* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins U. P., 1990), p. 54.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

affairs which entangles all the characters, even the most trivial.²⁰⁷

Following Dickens's novels *Kártyavár* not only contains a varied scale of represented emotions in their numerous episodes but also a wide range of other subtexts. These are small genres, such as letters, advertisements, legal documents and anecdotes. The dance-macabre which finishes *Kártyavár* is not based on Dickens but is a concluding subtext. It retrospectively interprets the narrative.

2.3.3 Characters

The complexity of the strongly metaphoric text and its symbolic meanings effect the way the reader perceives the characters of these works. The characters strike us as if they were imitations of real people but then often seem as if they were only enigmas of them.

This enigmatic but still realistic quality of the characters distances not only the novel's world from the reader but also the society of the novel's world from the reader's interpretation of the text. Both *Babits* and Dickens have often been wrongly criticised for discrepancies between the realism and the symbolic quality of particular characters because critics neglected to appreciate the virtues of this duality.²⁰⁸ Angus Wilson for example complains about the unconvincing psychology of Dickens's female protagonists.²⁰⁹ W. J. Harvey, on the hand, defends Dickens because he can see

²⁰⁷W. J. Harvey, *Character and Novel* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1965), p. 99.

²⁰⁸'Yet, as George Orwell has pointed out, his working-class characters are not his best. He tends to sentimentalise or caricature them, and the most memorable, such as Bill Sike, Sam Weller and Mrs. Gamp—a burglar, a valet and a midwife—are hardly representative of the working class as a whole', *Charles Dickens, A December Vision* (1986), pp. 12-13.

²⁰⁹'A more serious defect in my opinion also stems from this falsity about women, for the plan, so logical and complete, by which the Jarndyce lawsuit corrupts all who touch it (save Mr Jarndyce, a nonesuch) is quite upset when we discover that Lady Dedlock's fall from virtue has nothing to do with her being a claimant in the case. The fault is more glaring with Miss Flite, the little, mad suitor at law, specifically tells how her own sister went to the bad as a result of misery brought to the family by their own legal

the poetic virtues of his characterisation: 'Several of Dickens's characters, for example, have been condemned as melodramatic stereotypes; yet they have an excess of energy which suggests a residual heart of darkness far more profound than the merely queer or sinister'.²¹⁰

F. R. Leavis's view of *Hard Times* supports my argument and is also true in the case of *Kártyavár*: 'It suggests that the genius of the writer may fairly be described as that of a poetic dramatist, and that, in our preconceptions about 'the novel', we may miss, within the field of fictional prose, possibilities of concentration and flexibility of life such as we associate with Shakespearean drama'.²¹¹

Babits said in an interview (1927) concerning *Kártyavár*: 'Az alakok nem valóban élő embereket mintáznak, hanem típusokat. A legtöbbet adomák alapján írtam'.²¹² The fact is that, although Babits could have originally intended his characters to be types only, they also had been based on real people.²¹³ In this respect the creation of the characters of *Kártyavár* copies the characters of *Bleak House*.²¹⁴ Sometimes it even amplifies their enigmatic quality. I will quote from *Kártyavár*'s introduction because it has not been translated into English and its sophistication might be really interesting for the non-Hungarian reader. This quotation also supports and illustrates my argument:

involvement. But then Miss Flite's sister is never seen, her fall is hinted at in a veiled sentence', Angus F. J. Wilson, *The World Of Charles Dickens* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), p. 190.

²¹⁰W. J. Harvey, *Character and the Novel* (1965), p. 71.

²¹¹F. R. Leavis, *The Great Tradition* (London: Chatto and Windus: 1948), p. 241.

²¹²'The figures are not based on real people, but on types. I based most of them on types, and my sources were anecdotes', Mihály Babits, *Itt a halk és komoly beszéd ideje* (1997), p. 212.

²¹³The most extensive article dealing with the real origin of the characters is 'Élet és Irodalom' by Lajos Sipos. This can be found in *Babits-olvasókönyv* (Celldömölk: Pauz and Westermann, 1997), pp. 453-56, and also in the critical edition of the novel: Mihály Babits, *A gólyakalifa, Kártyavár* (Budapest: Historia Litteraria, Korona, 1997), pp. 623-32.

²¹⁴Kenneth Fielding analyses the origin and nature of the characters of *Bleak House* in 'Bleak House and Dickens' Originals: 'The romantic side of familiar things', *Dickens Studies Annual* (New York: AMS, 1996), pp. 119-33.

Nos, olvasó, hasonló játékra hívlak meg téged. Egy várost fogok alapítani én is, nem messze különben, csak itt mindjárt a főváros mellett, és benépesítem emberekkel, és nevezni fogom *Újvárosnak*. Hiába keresed Újvárost a mappán: Újpestet fogod találni és Kispestet és Rákospalotát és Erzsébetfalvát. Mind csak tökéletlen exemplárok! Újváros a negyedik dimenzióban áll, és lakóit sem ismerheted meg soha. Rájuk ismersz mégis? Meglehet! Istenem! az emberek mind olyan egyformák. De meg ne lepődj, ha becsületes ismerősöd a játékban gazságot követ el, vagy különös képességeket árul el, amit fel nem tettél róla. Nem ő az olvasó: bajsza tán hasonlít, de az orra már más.²¹⁵

In 'Balzac és Dickens' Babits writes about gestures and speech that create types out of the individuals in Dickens: 'Dickens emberábrázolása is ebben a regényben válik egészen jellegzetessé, híres mechanikus módszerével, mely az alakok szavajárásának és gesztusainak folytonos ismétlődéséből áll'.²¹⁶ The other statements Babits makes on type and character in Dickens are in 'Magyar irodalom' (1919).

These also explain how Babits created his own characters:

A második fajtája a bonyolultabb eszközöknek a karakter. Ez nem külső, hanem belső emberi kép, amit az író önmagából belülről él át és alakít ki, mégpedig kétféle módon: vagy megfigyelés vagy teremtés útján. Az író felhasználhat egy az életben megfigyelt embert vagy embertípust, melyet azután egységesen megrajzol. De adhat az életből ellesett mellett, versekből kiolvasott lelket is, és azt éli át önmagában. Így megrajzolva a kereteket egy típust ad, melyre ráismerhetünk. De teremthet egy egészen új, egyéni lelket úgy, hogy megismernők ha az utcán találkozoznánk vele. Például Dickens Mister Pickwickje.²¹⁷ [...] Dickens regényalakjai egy típus bélyegét

²¹⁵'Dear reader, I am now inviting you to a similar game. I will also found a city, not very far away, but right here on the outskirts of the capital; I will populate it with people, and call it *Újváros* (*New-town*). In vain will you look for Újváros on the map; you will only find Újpest, Kispest, Rákospalota and Erzsébetfalva. They are all imperfect specimens! Újváros stands in the fourth dimension and you will never get to know its inhabitants. Can you recognize them despite this? That might be the case! Oh, my God, people are so alike. Do not, however, be surprised if your honest acquaintance commits a villainous crime in the game, or gives evidence of talents such as you had never suspected of him. He is not who you think him to be, dear reader; his moustache might be like that of someone you recognise in him, but his nose is different', Mihály Babits, *A gólyakalifa, Kártyavár* (1997), p. 152.

²¹⁶'The Dickensian way of depicting characters: the well-known method of mechanically repeating the phrases and gestures of the characters becomes remarkably dominant here', Babits, *Az európai irodalom története*, p. 389. (Babits makes this remark in connection with *David Copperfield*).

²¹⁷'The second kind of more complicated means is character. This is not an external but an internal human image which the writer creates; lives through and creates from inside himself in two ways: either by observation or by creation. The author can, on the one hand, use a particular human being or type, which he can afterwards refine in his prose. On the other, besides the ones taken from life, he can read souls out of verses with which he can identify himself. By these frames, he presents us with a type which we might recognize. He can create an entirely new individual psyche in a way that we could recognize it, should we meet it in the street. One example of this is Dickens's Mr. Pickwick', Mihály Babits, *Esszék és tanulmányok* (1978), i, p. 639.

hordják magukon.²¹⁸

2.3.4 Descriptions of scenes

As I will illustrate further on, the landscape descriptions in this novel show explicit intertextuality with Dickens's wording. They also have a dual character in being not only sensuously realistic but also enigmatic and symbolic to a greater extent. The Biblical and mythological imagery in *Babits* and Dickens contributes to the enigmatic quality of their prose. Tivadar Rédey rightly observes this dualism in *Kártyavár*: 'Romantikusan túloz, még pedig szándékosan, bizonyos játékosztönnel, mely a drasztikumok halmozásával a valóságosra túllendülve akarja megérezéltetni a környezet fojtogató atmoszféráját.'²¹⁹ Mihály Földi describes the same phenomenon in a different manner: 'Még a *Kártyavár* is, amely Babitsnak legleirőbb regénye, nem egy valóságos város fényképe, hanem olyan képzelte, amelynek köveit ismerős színekkel festette be. A legkülönösebb naturalizmus ez! Megálmodja a valóságot, nem látja. [...] Költő bújt itt a naturalista író bőrébe, a költő az uccán jár és megálmodja a várost, behunyja szemét és átlát a falakon; rútat halmoz és romantikussá válik'.²²⁰

This technique in *Kártyavár* definitely has its roots in Dickens. It also serves the same purpose as what is called in the preface of *Bleak House*, the expression of the romantic side of familiar things: 'Dickens means to have it both ways: to root his

²¹⁸'Dickens's characters bear the mark of one type', *ibid.*, pp. 558-59.

²¹⁹'He exaggerates romantically and deliberately through a definite instinct for play which aggregates drastic statements and tries to give a picture of the stifling atmosphere of his contemporary environment by going beyond reality', Tivadar Rédey, 'Babits Mihály *Kártyavár*', *Napkelet* (1924) (465-68), p. 465.

²²⁰'Even *Kártyavár* which is the most descriptive of Babits's novels, is not a photograph of a real town, but of the imagination which painted its stones with its familiar colours. It is an example of a most extraordinary Naturalism! Instead of seeing reality it dreams it up. [...] The poet got under the skin of the naturalistic novelist; walks the streets; dreams up the city, closes his eyes, and sees through the walls, aggregates the ugliness and turns it into Romanticism', Mihály Földi, 'Költő a regényíróban', *Nyugat*, 2 (1924), 527-35 (p. 530).

action in reality, but to treat it romantically. That is to say, to make it wonderful and strange, to play with it linguistically, to involve it in a plot of striking coincidences, and yet avoid harsh unpleasantness'.²²¹

To conclude one can observe that the reader experiences the same manner of distancing from a direct perception of reality as the sort I demonstrated in the case of the characters. One can decode a town and its scenes from the prose but the author's poetical devices make this town simultaneously appear as if it were not quite real. This technique is not typical of Hungarian literature and therefore one can maintain that it has its genetic root in Dickens.

Aladár Schöpflin, György Rába, and László Rónay also comment on the novelty of the type of town Babits creates in *Kártyavár*. László Rónay²²² comments on its realistic, Tivadar Rédey and Aladár Schöpflin²²³ on its symbolic and expressionistic qualities.

Babits's depiction of Újváros also resembles the depiction of cities in Babits's verse. This nevertheless also has its origin in Dickens. In his correspondence with Babits, Kosztolányi mentions that certain scenes of 'Régi szálloda', 'Old Hotel' by Babits reminds one of depictions of London streets in *Oliver Twist*: 'A 'Régi szálloda' talán legelső helyen áll eredetiség dolgában. Nagy fantáziáról tesz tanúságot. Én, mielőtt elolvastam Dickensre gondoltam, ki a gyilkosságot oly bámulatos részletességgel festi le s a lelkiismeretfurdalást annyi megrázó erővel állítja elének'.²²⁴

²²¹Kenneth Fielding, 'Bleak House and Dickens' Originals' (1996) (119-33), p. 130.

²²²László Rónay, 'A kifejlődő kapitalizmus bírálata', *Új Írás* (1981) (74-83), pp. 77-82.

²²³Aladár Schöpflin, 'Kártyavár', *Nyugat* (1924) (509-10), p. 509.

²²⁴'The *Régi szálloda* is perhaps the most original verse in this volume. It is a product of a great imagination. It reminded me of Dickens who depicted murders in admirable detail and presented bad conscience with such touching empathy'. Kosztolányi thinks of Fagin when he is before the magistrate: 'he seemed to stand surrounded by a firmament, all bright with gleaming eyes', *Babits Mihály levelezése 1890-1906*, ed. Sándor Zsoldos (Budapest: Historia Litteraria and Korona, (1998), p. 241. See 'calling

Philip Fisher summarises a standard cityscape whose devices Babits

undoubtedly copied from Dickens's prose:

The descriptive description of the 'approaching traveller' who first sees smoky hints in the distance, then the shapes of the whole infernal city, then the human confusion of the outskirts, and finally enters with his portable outside-observer's consciousness, condenses the visited city into a distasteful spot on the wide and enduring earth, a spot permanently in the distance even when seen for a time in almost photographically horrible close-up.²²⁵

I will also demonstrate later on how Babits transposed Dickens's descriptions of cityscape and law in *Bleak House*²²⁶ and the settings of Coketown in *Hard Times* to suit the meanings of his own novel.²²⁷

2.3.5 Genre

The metaphorical description of these novels' worlds are symbolic of the novel's contemporary Hungary (*Kártyavár*) and nineteenth-century England (*Bleak House*). A course of history and justice is expressed by a variety of tones and mixed genre. The metaphorical, tonal and genre complexity are an end and a means to create detachment between the depicted world, its story-line, characters and reader. Both in Babits's and often in Dickens's case, reality is only bearable as the target of satire. Happiness and salvation can only be envisaged in a complex or even double narrative. Both *Hard Times* and *Bleak House* are satirical, social, and moral parables with

back the lustre of the eyes, the brightness of the smile, the beaming of the soul through its mask of clay', Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 76.

²²⁵Philip Fischer, 'City Matters: City Minds', in *Harvard English Studies 6: The Worlds of Victorian Fiction* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1975), p. 372.

²²⁶'What Dickens has done, in fact, in creating an institution upon which so many people are helplessly fixated, is to find a universal symbol for the human refusal or inability to live. [...] What Chancery and the Jarndyce suit offer together is a whole psychological model, an allegory and a metaphor for human existence', Geoffrey Thurley, *The Dickens Myth, its Genesis and Structure* (London and Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976), pp. 199-200.

²²⁷Catharine Gallagher, 'Family and Society in *Hard Times*', in *David Copperfield and Hard Times* (1995), p. 189.

fantastical elements. *Kártyavár* is their satirical, tragi-comic and often grotesque hypertext culminating in a *death-dance*.

Bleak House and Babits's novel are not detective stories but have features of crime stories. As opposed to this Babits called his own work a detective novel and defined what he meant by it:

Ha van ma készülő nagy műfaj, hasonlatos régi korok eposzaihoz: a detektív regény az. A mai nemzetek nagy problémája a fegyelem kérdése, az államhatalom és az anarchia, a rend és a szabadság veszélyeinek problémája—amelyeket ez a háború rettenetes rendjével és a modern anarchizmus tehetetlen korlátlanágával iszonyú képekben illusztrál—, a kaland és az egyén lehetőségeinek korlátai egy rettenetesen uniformizált társadalomban, a lázadás és a zsarnokság:—s éppen ez a probléma, ez az ellentét adja meg a detektívregények témáját.²²⁸

Some critics call *Bleak House* a detective story and call their readers attention to all the points Babits thinks so relevant in *Kártyavár*: '*Bleak House* is at the same time a satire on law, a detective story, a social tract, a psychological model, and a tragic metaphor of the human condition'.²²⁹ These themes surely have roots in Dickens's works. As I have shown above, Babits did turn to Dickens for justification during this period of his ~~career~~.²³⁰ Although satirical crime stories did exist in Hungarian literature before Babits, this type of partly realistic but strongly enigmatic and satirical short novel is Babits's invention. His master could not have been Jókai but only Dickens in this respect.

To conclude, both Babits's and Dickens's novel incorporate features of crime

²²⁸ Should there be a big genre resembling the ancient epic verse today, that is the detective-novel. The big problem today's nations face is discipline the problem of state power and anarchy; of order and threats to freedom. All of these are illustrated in the terrible pictures of the horrifying order of the war and the unbounded helplessness of modern anarchism. Adventure and the limits of the individual's opportunities in a frighteningly standardised society; revolt and tyranny; this problem and opposition that provide the theme of the detective novel', *Itt a halk és komoly beszéd ideje* (1997), p. 31.

²²⁹ Geoffrey Thurley, *The Dickens Myth, its Genesis and Structure* (1976), p. 123.

²³⁰ See footnote 60.

novel which naturally entail detection.²³¹ Investigations fail because of the corruption of the characters and their environment; a series of ethical failures lead to the collapse of the novel's world in the case of *Babits*, and to unsolved issues and victims in the case of Dickens.

The gradually unfolding episodic story-line, which is in harmony with its dramatic quality also points to Dickens as *Babits*'s model. Geoffrey Thurley writes about Dickens's prose: 'The effect of one thread (or more) of the story is carried over in the mind while others are presented to it, so that one's attention, though never distracted, is enriched by the harmony of simultaneously existent ideas'.²³² One only comes to appreciate these layered meanings of both *Babits*'s and Dickens's novel when looking back on their various parts.

2.4 A close analysis of the text

2.4.1 *Babits*'s transposition of the beginning of *Bleak House* in *Kártyavár*

In all the three novels the title already draws the readers' attention to the necessity of a metaphorical level of reading.²³³ The introduction of *Kártyavár* follows that of *Bleak House* from this point of view.²³⁴ It creates a morally, emotionally and historically

²³¹'How can one weigh the puzzle interest of the detective story against the interest in characterization that marks the crime novel, especially when the detective story often contains some characterization and the crime novel often contains a puzzle', Julian Symons, *Bloody Murder: from Detective Story to the Crime Novel* (London: Faber, 1972), p. 21.

²³²Geoffrey Thurley, *The Dickens Myth, its Genesis and Structure* (1976), p. 123.

²³³'Cicero tells us that the pleasure in metaphor is in jumping over the obvious [...] Similarly the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* defines the use of metaphor as "taking a word which applies to one thing and transferring it to another, because the comparison seems to authorise this transfer"', Christine Brooke-Rose, *A Grammar of Metaphor* (London: Secker; Warburg, 1958), pp. 6-15.

²³⁴Steven Connor writes: 'So we can see that, as in *Bleak House*, the opposition between different kinds of language and different attitudes towards it is a way of sustaining important thematic oppositions in the book. As in *Bleak House*, the contrast seems to be between metaphor and metonymy, or language as presence and language of difference. [...] the metaphorical world of Jarndyce and Esther which the narrative accredits against the endlessly multiplying, metonymic confusion of Chancery and the public world', Steven Connor, *David Copperfield and Hard Times*, ed. John Peck (Basingstoke: Macmillan;

decodable metaphorical frame for the novel's story. In *Kártyavár*, as in *Bleak House*, the motifs introduced in the first chapter; weave their way through the various strands of the novel's story and are tied up in the finishing scene. One thread of metaphorical motifs in Babits's novel is the Hungarian bureaucracy whose operation copies the model of the Chancery suit in *Bleak House*. Babits calls the files of his case a game in his introduction, whereas Dickens presents his purely as a case. The commingling of metaphors containing legal, political and bureaucratic motifs and moral, historical and Biblical themes are alike in both novels. The systematic commixture of these serves to give the characters and their story an enigmatic dimension. This dimension of the characters' story reflects back on the themes too. To illustrate my point I will quote from Babits's introduction, since Babits's text is almost unknown and inaccessible in English while Dickens's is easy to obtain.²³⁵ Many books, such as

Geoffrey Thurley's,²³⁶ explains its many layered text. A part of the introduction:

Apáink hivatalnokemberek voltak: akták és aktapapírok szerte heverték nálunk otthon is. Ó, mennyi görbe lábú, nagy hasú török pasát pingáltam, se füle, se farka versikét firkáltam annak idején azokra a kemény, ropogós, kékes árkusokra, amiken olyan szép, gusztusos, gömbölyű betűkkel volt odanyomtatva felülről:

ŐFELSÉGE A KIRÁLY NEVÉBEN:

és lejjebb ez a rejtelmes szó:

Indokok:

Egyszer aztán arra a gondolatra jöttünk, hogy az aktákból valóságos akták legyenek, kicsiben: játékakták elképzelt pörökről, elképzelt bírának és kigondolt nevű minisztereknek nagy-cirkalmas aláírásával. A pörökből lassanként történetek nőttek, mesék, amiket szőttünk-fontunk, bogoztunk végérhetetlenül, mindenikünk tudott valamit hozzátenni, egymást szülték az iratok, és a pörök szereplői mind jobban és jobban megelevenedtek a fantáziánkban: valóságos emberek lettek ezek, akik éltek, akartak, csaltak, loptak, birtokokat szereztek, eladtak, panaszokat emeltek, s

New York: St. Martin, 1995), pp. 160-61.

²³⁵Charles Dickens, *Bleak House* (London; New York; Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1948), pp. 1-7.

²³⁶Geoffrey Thurley, *The Dickens Myth, its Genesis and Structure* (1976).

védekeztek, fellebeztek, és prókátorokat mozgósítottak. A prókátorok, a bírák, a miniszterek ismét élő személyek voltak maguk is: új 'jogalanyok', akik tettek-vettek, akikkel történtek események: a táblabíró kuriai bírónak léptették elő, a fiskálist valami 'homályos ügy' miatt kitörölték az ügyvédi kamara lajstromából, a kormány megbukott, a király megkegyelmezett valami gyilkosnak.

Apránként egész országunk támadt így, és megtartottuk az első népszámlálást. Hosszú ívek listáiba róttuk a csupán papirosan létező lakosságot, gyermekes pedánsággal rendeztük gyülekező irattárunkat, mely egy egész kis világ egyetlen valóságát képezte, és nem engedtünk azontúl semmilyen eseményt nyom nélkül elrepülni: anyakönyvet vezettünk a születésekről, esküvőkről és halálozásokról, házakat építettünk, adásvételi szerződéseket kötöttünk, mappát csináltunk a városhoz, lerajzoltuk a fundusokat, telekkönyvbe róttuk az adóságokat. Folyt a játék hónapokon át, új istenek, s egy gondolt ország királyai lettünk, s már nem éltünk a magunk világában; ha beszélgettünk, egy képzelte élet híreit újságoltuk egymásnak, és a felnőttek meg nem értettek bennünket.²³⁷

Babits adds further meaning to his narrative by providing the children's game with the context of a bigger game. Babits described the desolation and despondency he felt when he wrote this novel in *Nyugat* (1916): 'Azon borzasztó valóság közepette, amelyet ma élünk, egy nagy mesébe akart menekülni: egy óriási építménybe, mint valami templom azíliumába: s ezt a regény előszavában őszintén kifejezte'.²³⁸ Thus the

²³⁷Our fathers were clerks, and there were piles of documents and files at home. I remember the amount of bow-legged and pot-bellied Turkish pashas I daubed, and the nonsense rhymes I scribbled on those hard and crisp blue sheets of paper, on top of which was printed with such beautiful, appealing round letters: ON BEHALF OF HIS MAJESTY THE KING and a bit further down the mysterious word: *causes*: At one time it occurred to us that the files could be made into real pretend files: play files about imaginary suits with big scrawled signatures of imaginary ministers' fictional names. The suits gradually developed into stories and then into tales which we kept endlessly spinning, weaving, and knotting in such a way that we were all able to add something to them, and the files gave birth to newer files the characters of whose suits had become more and more alive in our imagination, and became real people who lived, wanted things, cheated, acquired property, sold things, raised complaints and defended themselves, appealed and mobilized solicitors. The solicitors, the judges, and the ministers were again living persons: new *legal entities* who ran errands and to whom all sorts of things had happened, for example, the judge of the County Court had become promoted judge of the Supreme Court, that due to some *shady dealing* the attorney had been disbarred, that the government had fallen, or the king had shown mercy to a murderer. Bit by bit in a like manner, we acquired a whole country and held the first census. We rammed the population which existed only on paper, into sheets of long lists and organized our growing archive with the tidiness of a child. Our archive constituted the sole reality of an entire small world, and did not allow even the tiniest event to pass without notice: we registered births, marriages, and deaths, built houses, made contracts of purchase, created a portfolio for the city, created estates, and put down the debts in the land register. The game proceeded over months; we became the new gods and the kings of an imaginary country and ceased to live in the real world. Whenever we spoke, we told each other news of an imaginary life, and the adults had no chance of understanding us', *Kárvavár* (1997), pp. 151-52.

²³⁸In the midst of the terrible reality in which we have to live today; the author wanted to escape into a

bigger game, which is the Great War, shows Hungary in the light of the children's innocent game on the one hand and a desperate world which is the object of a higher political game on the other:

Akkor kezdtem még ezt a kis játékot, mikor velünk a *nagy játékot* kezdték: hazánkkal, életünkkel, vagyonunkkal és gyermekeinkkel—mit csinálhattunk volna? gyengék voltunk! S nem az volt-e a legboldogabb, aki gyerek módjára játszott a pad alatt, s akit egy gondolt élet eseményei jobban érdekeltek, mint véres hírlapjaink? De jaj, gyöngék voltunk, s a nagy játék tovább győzte vérrel, mint a kicsi kedvvel és erővel. A játék abbamaradt s száz esztendő után nyúlok hozzá újra: mert amint mondják, hogy 'száz mérföld a Duna', száz esztendő az idők vér-Dunája. De játszunk csak tovább: mint a gyermek a szörnyű árvízben, ha felkapaszkodhat egy deszkára, felejtí a veszélyt s folytatja játékát.²³⁹

In connection with *Bleak House*, Robert Newson summarizes the origin of this structural and thematic device: 'The chaos of the novel's first page of course 'stands for' what Chancery does to people in nineteenth-century England. But what Chancery does to people in nineteenth-century England also stands for chaos. We cannot distinguish between the symbol and the thing symbolised'.²⁴⁰

2.4.2 Kártyavár's story and its circumstances

I describe the story and often quote from the text for several reasons. First, because my thesis aims not only to show the English genetic links of Babits's novels but also to introduce Babits's prose to the English speaking readership.

big tale: into a huge construction like that of a sanctuary of some church, as he expressed this in his introduction to his novel', *Itt a halk és komoly beszéd ideje* (1997), p. 26.

²³⁹'I started this small game when they started the *big game* with us; with our country, our life, our property, and our children. What could we have done? We were weak! And were not those the happiest who played under the desk like a child, and made themselves more interested in the events of a fictional life than in the bloody newspapers? Alas, we were weak, and the big game had a more abundant supply of blood than the small had of spirit and strength. The game was discontinued and I am touching upon it again after a hundred years, because, as the saying goes, *a hundred miles is the Danube*, a hundred years is the blood-Danube of the times. Let us, however, play on like a child in the terrible flood who, having climbed up a plank of wood, becomes oblivious of the peril and carries on with their game', *Kártyavár* (1997), p. 153.

²⁴⁰Robert Newson, *Dickens on the Romantic Side of Familiar Things* (1977), pp. 113-14.

The first scene of *Kártyavár* is set in the streets of Újváros in which the newly arrived district-court judge, Partos, is looking for lodgings. He goes into a café where he meets an old class-mate of his, Kovács, who is a teacher. Kovács takes him to Hirschfeld-Island where he gets to know the mayor. The mayor drives off in his carriage, and the judge and Kovács go to the upholsterer's to have some furniture covers made.

A central motif in this part is the train on which Partos arrives, and on which two main characters from the town's past leave for Vienna. The train is also a central motif in *Hard Times*. The arrival of Harthouse, and the debate at the circus on how Tom is going to leave, are both connected with the train. Machinery as the image of the town and its reality is another key image in *Kártyavár*. The use of this motif has roots in Coketown and in Chancery in *Bleak House*: 'Partos úgy érezte, mintha ennek az új városnak barátságtalan nyüzsgése egyszerre elkapná és magával ragadná az ő lelkét is. Mint aki nagy szeles masina mellé jut és megérzi a sodrát. Szédült'.²⁴¹

In Újváros Rose Street has no roses but dust. There are signs which help strangers find people, but these are all enigmatic, just like the water tower in the middle of the town which recurs again and again. This tower is firstly related to the Tower of Babel in *Hard Times*. Secondly, it has roots in a fairy tale as one can find it in Tennyson's *The Lady of Shalott*.²⁴² The use of the tower in *Hard Times* is part of a metaphoric description with a striking visual effect:

Machinery slackened; throbbing feebly like a fainting pulse; stopped. The bell again; the glare of light and heat dispelled; the factories, looming heavy in the black wet

²⁴¹ 'Partos felt that the bustle of the town was going to grab him, and carry his soul away. Like someone approaching a big windy machine, feels its wake. He felt dizzy', *Kártyavár* (1997), p. 163.

²⁴² 'Four gray walls, and four gray towers, / Overlook a space of flowers, / And the silent isle embowers / *The Lady of Shalott*', Alfred Tennyson, *Poems and Plays* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 26.

night—their tall chimneys rising up into the air like competing towers of Babel.²⁴³

Kártyavár transposes this device. It follows its precursor in creating a strong visual effect. Instead of the contrast between darkness and brightness, however, Babits uses colours and shapes. The result is a less sharply contrasted picture:

Nagy puszta térség volt: homokkupacok, kőhalmazok, mésztörmelékek heverték rajta szanaszét. És a közepén pompázott egy torony, egy sohasem látott formájú és színű idomtalan nagyságú bábeli torony, amely fönn hirtelen nekivastagodott és megdöbbentő nagy fejet eresztett, erkéllyel és képtelen ablakkal: egy víztorony! ²⁴⁴

A hearse in *Kártyavár* has a comic, ostentatious, and sad effect. It is also compared to the Assyrian-style modern town hall, and to a street-cleaning vehicle whose water beats the dust. This type of metaphorically comparative description involving the town's buildings also has its roots in *Hard Times*.

Babits's depiction of the port which lies on Partos and Kovács's way to the island transposes Dickens's prose in the same way as I have already illustrated. It expresses heat which is connected with the dirt the factories produce. As above, Babits takes the high contrast out of the description and extends the description of dirt onto inanimate objects. An extract from Dickens:

The street were hot and dusty on the summer day, and the sun was so bright that it even shone through the heavy vapour drooping over Coketown, and could not be looked at steadily. Stokers emerged from low underground doorways into factory yards, and sat on steps, and posts, and palings, wiping their swarthy visages, and contemplating coals. The whole town seemed to be frying in oil.²⁴⁵

Its hypertext from Babits:

Hajók, kémények fehér, fekete színe. Por, széntörmelék, zsákok. Füst! Búcsúzó napfény. Avult köveken nagy vaskarikák piszkos ágya. A földön egy drótkötél

²⁴³ Charles Dickens, *Hard Times* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1995), p. 84.

²⁴⁴ 'It was a huge bleak field covered in heaps of sand, piles of stone and lime-stone debris. In the middle of it shone a tower; a Tower of Babel of such an unattractive scale and colour as never seen before. It had suddenly become fatter towards the top and grew an amazingly huge head with balconies and unimaginable windows: a water tower!', *Kártyavár* (1997), p. 157.

²⁴⁵ Charles Dickens, *Hard Times* (1995), p. 116.

számára való óriás faspulni, meztelen. Girbe fatörzsek, koromtól feketén, sivány folt, fűvek, keményre taposott hepehupás talaj. Egy nagy gyár, gyárépületek csupasz falai, elfeketült, törött ablakokkal.²⁴⁶

From Kovács, and the local engineer, Partos receives an introduction into the island's water processing plant which is enigmatically described as: 'Zöldes, békanyálas állott víz közepett, mintegy méternyire a talajvíz színétől, mélyre befűrt acélcsövek nyílásai'.²⁴⁷ The river in Coketown is not much cleaner and the description of it served as a hypotext for Babits. Its metaphors and symbolism express the disgusting dirtiness of the water. Babits modifies his source by replacing the animate activity in Dickens with the staleness of the dirty still water:

but the mills, and the courts and the alleys, baked at a fierce heat. Down upon the river that was black and thick with dye [...] Coketown boys [...] rowed a crazy boat, which made a spumous track upon the water as it jogged along, while every dip of the oar stirred up vile smells.²⁴⁸

Here we learn about Partos from the narrator's point of view. The heteroglossial feature of *Kártyavár* which follows Dickens comes to the foreground from here on. Partos resembles Mr Pickwick in being an outsider who, although unheroic and *naïve*, tries to make sense of the situations in which he finds himself. He is much like what Babits says in his study about Pickwick as a type.²⁴⁹ Partos's involuntary Pickwickian peregrination and experience provide a point of view

²⁴⁶'The black and white colour of boats and chimneys. Dust, coal, dust, and sacks. Smoke! Parting sunshine. Dirty beds of iron rings on ancient stones. Curving tree-trunks blackened by the soot, bleak patches of grass, bumpy ground trampled solid. A huge factory, bare walls of factory buildings, blackened and broken windows', *Kártyavár* (1997), p. 166.

²⁴⁷'From the midst of green, slimy, and stale water, tops of steel pipes drilled deep into the ground stood out a metre over the surface of the ground water', *ibid.*, p. 167.

²⁴⁸Charles Dickens, *Hard Times* (1995), p. 116.

²⁴⁹'Why he should be among these gulls, challenging their adulation of Pickwick's arch-gullibility, cannot otherwise be explained', Harry Levin, 'The Uncles of Dickens' in *The Worlds of Victorian Fiction: Harvard English Studies* 6 (1995), p. 10. Apart from the gullibility and the outsider's role another feature Mr. Pickwick and Partos have in common is that they are both imitations of Don Quixote. It is valid in the case of both heroes that: 'Mr Pickwick's investigations, like Don Quixote's adventures, usually terminate in anticlimaxes. [...] Worldly situations tend to cast him in the role of a guy, a butt, a figure of fun', *ibid.*, p. 12. Don Quixote as a model hero will appear again in *Halálfiat*.

through which we can look at Újváros's characters. In this respect, his role in the narrative is similar not only to that of Pickwick, but also to that of Esther Summerson. Esther's simplicity also helps us understand the otherwise complex and manipulated story-lines in *Bleak House*.²⁵⁰ Richard Skimpole and Miss Flite are, again, similar characters who provide the story of *Bleak House* with an extra perspective. Újváros for Partos is like Chancery for Miss Flite: 'A bírót ismét vont a nagy masina, amerre nem akart és nem szeretett'.²⁵¹

János Madár, the mayor is introduced to us through newspapers and political gossip in the café. He is said to have unexpectedly voted for the government party, and this has stirred up public opinion. He is referred to here as 'the Pied Piper of Hamelin',²⁵² and a wizard who, even though in a scandalous way, has created the town, a 'serpent-nest', out of nothing. The sarcastic, sometimes almost absurd dialogues show the ambivalent nature of the whole establishment, and people's trivial mindedness when forming their judgements. Kovács dislikes Madár and feels inferior to him, and Partos is impressed by Madár when he meets him on the island.

Kovács is Partos's leader all through the novel. Though he is the head of a family he is never at home. Therefore his family is not unlike Jellyby's. It could well have been modelled on the Jellybys because this type of family is fairly uncommon in Hungarian literature before Babits. Kovács is self-centred, gregarious and gives himself a knowledgeable air. He is the first to introduce the main characters of the town, Madár, Kerbolt and Hirschfeld, to Partos.

From the island Kovács and Partos go to the upholsterer, Ampenszán, to get

²⁵⁰ A detailed analysis of this aspect of Esther's role is in W. J. Harvey, *Character and the Novel* (1965).

²⁵¹ 'The judge was again drawn on by the great machinery in a direction which he did not desire and did not like', *Kártyavár* (1997), p. 168.

²⁵² Ibid., p. 140.

furniture covers. This is absurd, since Partos does not even have a flat yet. The description of Ampenszán's environment is again Dickensean. This is most likely the text that Sőtér describes as 'A nyomor bemutatása dickensi sémákba szorul'.²⁵³

Nagy, rút udvarba fordultak be: szurtos kis lány zöld pléhkocsiban tologatott egy ordító csecsemőt s a melléképület mellett piszkos deszkán hevert a fabakon, ég tudja mióta, egy horpadt, poros, szomorú pincskalap.²⁵⁴

A house altar described with Christian symbolism is shown inside the room in Ampenszán's house. From the upholsterers, Kovács goes to a pub, and Partos to a concert. The description of the pub, and its haunted quality, also draws on Dickens's prose:

Évek, évek, hogy be vagytok néha zsúfolva egy estébe és egy kis szobába! Nem kísértetes kocsmá volt-e ez? Eleven emberek kísértetei lestek a fülledt melegben, vártak egy varázsszavat: Újváros holt múltja, mint eleven átok leste a jövőt, a furcsa varázsszavat: 'Hogyan szavazott a polgármester?'²⁵⁵

The concert-hall where Partos goes, forms a strong contrast to the pub, but it is morally no more elevating than the pub. It glitters with brand new chandeliers among the town's dust just like the town-hall. It dazzles Partos. We meet the town notables here. The subjects of their conversation are money, the town administration, prostitution, and again the mayor and his vote. Partos overhears the talk, and is baffled by the mercenary spirit that permeates everything in the town.

In his exaggerated self-importance, Ampenszán resembles Dickens's Smallweed though he is less ruthless and greedy than Smallweed. He is strongly committed politically and grateful to Madár for having given him the position of

²⁵³'The description of poverty is crammed into schematic Dickensean patterns', see footnote 199.

²⁵⁴'They turned into a big ugly courtyard where a grubby little girl was pushing a screaming baby along in a green tin cart by the outhouse, and Lord knows since when, a dented, dusty, and sad bowler hat has been lying on the jack of a dirty plank of wood', *Kárvavár* (1997), p. 174.

²⁵⁵'Oh, years! years! How you are sometimes crammed into one evening and a small room! Was not this a haunted pub? The ghosts of live people were peeping in the stifling heat, and waited for the magic word: How did the mayor vote?', *ibid.*, p. 161.

upholsterer in the past and for his promotion to director of the cemetery which, as he puts it, is the only quiet place in Újváros. In the pub he becomes drunkest of all.

Mrs Tókéssy who is the beauty of the town, and the alleged lover of the Lord Chancellor, mediates between the mayor and his father-in-law as they argue about the money for the land the town wants. Partos is impressed by her looks and manner. Hersey, who is an MP and a sociologist opposes Madár and considers him corrupt.

When the mayor leaves the concert-hall, the reader is introduced to his thoughts in a monologue reported by the narrator. He is shown without his impressive public behaviour: 'a város óriás masináját érezte lüktetni'.²⁵⁶ He also feels as if the walls of the town-hall were about to collapse. He fancies himself as: 'a mesebeli királyfi, aki a levegőből palotákat emelt!'.²⁵⁷ and has broken all the laws to build his town. He considers the town's balance of power, and refuses to break with Kerbolt to gain the rich industrialist, Hirschfeld's support. In his despair he thinks about leaving everything, '*après moi le deluge*', and moving up. It is difficult to see Madár as human. He is like a puppet determined by his own ambition, calculations and fall. On his arrival at Kerbolt's house he finds a guest, through whose person and story the history of the town is revealed. This guest is Kerbolt's old love, Vilma, whose person and family Kerbolt involuntarily destroyed by strictly adhering to administrative rules when he was the town judge. His case is compared to the ancient story of Catilina. In return he was expelled and later taken back by Madár, against the will of Hirschfeld, who was part of an interest group with Vilma's family. Kerbolt's alleged ideal is a rustic existence and he characterizes his return to town with metaphors such as one can originally find in Dickens on the power of *Chancery*: 'Újváros visszahítta,

²⁵⁶'and feels the pulsation of the town's giant machinery', *Kártyavár* (1997), p. 202.

²⁵⁷'the prince in the tale who has raised palaces from nothing', *ibid.*, p. 203.

visszaszította, mint egy iszonyú szívómasina egy elszállt porszemet'.²⁵⁸

Kerbolt's house has the most beautiful garden in Newtown. This garden is described as natural and cultivated and Babits calls it literally an English garden. Although Tivadar Rédey claims that 'Kerbolt tanácsos úr bármely nemes angol realista regénynek büszkesége lehetne'.²⁵⁹ Kerbolt and his environment (an idyll in the middle of Újváros) is closer to Jókai's similar description. Kerbolt's garden is, however, tainted by the town in all senses:

A messze sűrű lombok remegtek valami gyenge szélben. Senkinek sem volt Újvárosban oly szép kertje, mint Kertboltnak. Az ablak alatt, az orgonabokor mellett, egy délceg platán állt. Madár végigsimította két ujját a fa kérgén és aztán a fény elé tartotta. A két ujj teljesen fekete lett a koromtól.²⁶⁰

The whistle of the train can be heard there too. The motifs and metaphors of this part transpose the ones from *Hard Times*. The matrix²⁶¹ Babits takes from Dickens is that widespread industrial dirt taints everything that surrounds it. Babits makes us perceive this excessive dirt by showing it on such a small scale as a fingertip. Thus he minimises Dickens's cosmic dimensions:

You only knew the town was there, because you knew there could have been no such sulky blotch upon the prospect without a town. A blur of soot and smoke, now confusedly tending this way, now that way, now aspiring to the vaults of Heaven, now murkily creeping along the earth, as the wind rose and fell, or changed its quarter.²⁶²

After Kovács's and Partos's conversation, the drunken argument in the pub, and Madár's own thoughts, we get to know Kerbolt even more closely through his own dialogue with Madár and then with his wife Ilona. According to Madár's words,

²⁵⁸ 'Újváros called him back as a terrible vacuum cleaner does a speck of dust in flight', *ibid.*, p. 218.

²⁵⁹ 'Kerbolt could be the protagonist of any 'noble English realist novel', 'Tivadar Rédey', 'Babits Mihály, *Kártyavár*' (1924), 465-68 (p. 466).

²⁶⁰ 'The dense foliage in the distance trembled in the light breeze. No one in Újváros had as beautiful a garden as Kerbolt. Underneath the window, next to the lilac bush there was a stately maple. Madár stroked its bark with his two fingers, and then held them towards the light. His two fingers had become completely black from the soot', *Kártyavár* (1997), p. 207.

²⁶¹ Allen, *Intertextuality* (2005), pp. 118-19.

²⁶² Charles Dickens, *Hard Times* (1995), p. 115.

Kerbolt is the most perfect administrator in Europe, and infallible. Kerbolt excuses himself by being *only* true to his principles! Ilona and Kerbolt, according to Madár, are like the butterfly and the lion. Apart from her husband Ilona is the psychologically most convincing character. Despite her helpless weakness, she still hurts Kerbolt in a childish revengeful way. Kerbolt is strict with himself and cannot be otherwise with others either. He is unable to allow himself to be weak; lenient; to love or be loved. We learn of his fragile self-image from his own words. His main moral question is: 'Hol kezdődik a bűn?'²⁶³ He is the only character in the novel with psychologically consistent verisimilitude.²⁶⁴ He constantly tortures himself. By being unable to forgive himself for a past failure and through his suicidal death in the end, he is a male copy of Lady Dedlock.

From Kerbolt's house Madár goes back to the concert-hall after dropping in at home. This leads the reader back to the material reality of the town. This is important because at the beginning of *Hard Times*, and often in *Bleak House*, the narrative is dominantly enigmatic and it is the characters' actions that provide the prose and its settings with a realistic quality. The story-line of *Kártyavár* is revealed in a like manner by the comings and goings of Madár, Vilma, Kerbolt, and Partos. Madár is unpleasant and indifferent to his family when he is at home. In a reported monologue the reader is introduced to two of his preoccupations. One of these is to get Kerbolt onto a committee which is to examine his rule of the town. The other is to get money for Újváros. Madár sees Partos as a source of cash, since Partos still has money left

²⁶³'Where does sin start?', *Kártyavár* (1997), p. 215.

²⁶⁴His psychology and the depiction of his psychology resembles Mihály Timár's in Mór Jókai, *Az aranyember* (Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1960). Both heroes have a past failure which casts a shadow on the rest of their lives. The failure is connected to their wives in both cases. Timár becomes bound to his wife because of his wealth which had its shady origin in hers. Kerbolt is tied to his wife because of his status. They both respect their wives but do not truly love them. They both suffer because of their emotional infidelity too.

from the loan which he is to spend on a house at this stage. Then Madár appears again as his brilliant, entertaining public self at the concert.

The central subject of gossip at the concert is a scandalous argument over the performers' payment, the town administration and Partos. Partos perceives the artists as a bunch of '*business-men waiting*', and during the music fancies himself as a member of the élite; a smart villa-owner. The English wording appears strange in the Hungarian text here and calls the reader's attention to original sources. The whole scene is ambivalent; mostly comic verging on farce. The motifs characterising the town, again, the tower, and the music become part of the same metaphorical description introducing the concert which is another example of Babits's transposition of Dickens's metaphoric descriptions:

A zene iszonyú forró hullámokat ver, a hullámok köveket hordanak, épít, épít. Nagy bábeli tornyok emelkednek, gömbölyű, homorú, domború kövekből rettenetes várak, szenvelgett tornyokkal és gyárkéményekkel.²⁶⁵

From the concert Partos is again carried off by the elite crowd to another café than the *Selig*. Partos stays here late, and even after several attempts at trying to catch different vehicles like a tram, a carriage, and finally a train, he is unable to get back to Budapest, and is taken by a stranger to spend the night in the *Selig Café*. He happens to meet Vilma here who comes from Kerbolt's house. Vilma's angry derision of the town is aired by the narrator who reports her monologue. According to another simultaneous story-line, Ilona is scared by a storm and therefore goes to find Kerbolt in the summer-house because he sometimes sleeps there. She cannot find him since he has gone to meet Vilma in *Selig Café*.

²⁶⁵ 'The music has raised terrible waves, carrying stones, building and building. Great Towers of Babel rise, dreadful castles made of round, convex, and concave stones with long-suffering towers and factory chimneys', *Kárvavár* (1997), pp. 244-45.

In this part Babits even transposed *Hard Times*'s and *Bleak House*'s frequent interplay between the real and metaphorical meanings of light and dark. The descriptions with lights in a room or in dark streets, light and dark nights and metaphors with candles implying moral message disseminate their meaning in the text in Dickens.²⁶⁶ The argument over the electricity supply which provides light for the town, the candles and the parts of the day are examples of Babits's hypertextual use of Dickensean prose in *Kártyavár*. The following passage in *Kártyavár* not only includes the metaphors of light and darkness but also a reference to an English tale:

Nagy éjjeli munka folyt a torony körül, az állványok mozgó fáklyák fényében rezegtek, a falak is rezegtek a világos, vörös füst mögött, mint vékony kulisszák a légvonalban. Ah... naponta 17-szer kerülik meg a munkások a tornyot. Villogott és nyüzsgött az egész, mint valami ismeretlen világító férgek égő bolya. És Partos régi, gyermekkorában olvasott kalandos történet furcsa illusztrációjára gondolt, mikor Tom és Mary eltévedtek az őserdőben, és egyszerre csak a fák, a vastag fák—mintha ezer-ezer szögletes, fényes ablakot, és ragyogott és nyüzsgött egyszerre az egész nagy erdő. Mind óriási odvas fák voltak azok, és néger törpék laktak az odvakban és a nagy őserdő egy város volt.²⁶⁷

The motif of incessant work and its expression has its roots in *Hard Times*:

Hopeless labour! If he led them out of rooms where it was, if he shut up draws and closets where it stood, if he drew the curious from places where he knew it to be secreted, and got them out into the streets, the very chimneys of the mills assumed that shape, and round them was the printed word.²⁶⁸

The commingling of the same sort of imagery can also be found in *Bleak House*:

distant furnaces of it glowing and bubbling in its youth; bright fireworks of it showering about, under the blows of the steam hammer; red-hot iron, white-hot iron,

²⁶⁶Two examples can be found in Charles Dickens, *Bleak House* (1948), pp. 564, 764.

²⁶⁷'People were working hard around the tower; the scaffolding was trembling in the light of the torches, the walls were trembling behind the light red smoke resembling the thin wings of a flight of crows. The workers go round the tower seventeen times a day. The whole scene gleamed and bustled, like a heap of unknown worms in flames. And Partos thought about the strange illustration of the adventure story he read as a child, and in which Tom and Mary had become lost in the ancient woods, and suddenly the dark and thick woods [...] thousands and thousands of angular and bright windows of light [...] and the ancient woods was a town', *Kártyavár* (1997), p. 259.

²⁶⁸Charles Dickens, *Hard Times* (1995), p. 90. Another similar description is in *ibid.*, p. 69.

cold-black iron; an iron taste, an iron smell, and a Babel of iron sounds.²⁶⁹

Briliant, who was the indirect cause of Kerbolt's old failure appears unexpectedly in *Café Selig* to take revenge for past wrongs, and to take Vilma to Vienna. Kerbolt is in the café primarily to purge himself of his past iniquities. Kovács tries to create order by assuming authority. First Partos appears to be comic; then he panics, and then seems to be silly again. He loses his bag and all his personal documents; is seduced by a prostitute, and only realizes at dawn that he has not been dreaming a detective tale, but has made a fool of himself. Kovács seems *naïve* and comic by trying to appeal to the power of law and order. Briliant perceives the comic quality of the situation, and expresses not only irony but also self-irony. The heteroglossia of the prose is dominant in all these parts here.

This episode in *Selig* contains two relevant English references. One is Nick Carter²⁷⁰ and the other is Sherlock Holmes.²⁷¹ These detective names are part of the English reference system of *Kártyavár*. They are foreign in the Hungarian text and thus call the reader's attention to their importance. Babits writes that the people in *Selig* behaved themselves as if they had learnt to read with Nick Carter. (This might even be a confession on his behalf because Nick Carter will be a relevant reference in *Halálfiat* too).²⁷² Both names also allude to the detective or crime story features of *Kártyavár*.

The discussion of town politics and of Madár's relationship with Kerbolt

²⁶⁹ Charles Dickens, *Bleak House* (1948), p. 846.

²⁷⁰ *Kártyavár* (1997), p. 233.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 234.

²⁷² Fredric Merrill Van Rensselaer Dey, who wrote the Nick Carter detective stories, churning out an average of 25,000 words per week for seventeen years, went by an astonishing number of different pen names, including Marmaduke Dey and Frederic Ormond, as well as the more generic A Celebrated Author of "Nick Carter" [...] By the 1880s, Westerns were eclipsed by stories of urban life featuring heroes such as detective Nick Carter', www-sul.stanford.edu/depts/dp/pennies/cover.html, 02, 07, 2005, pp. 4, 6.

Van Rensselaer

verges on farce because of the pettiness of the talkers that they cannot perceive. Only

Kerbolt and his understanding of Madár is different:

Ő, aki mindig imádta a jellemet, akaratot, most nagyon is látta a sorsnak, a helyzetnek a hatalmát, amely ellen lehetetlen küzdeni. Báb, mindenki báb: s nem volt-e ő is báb mindig, helyzetének bábja, mikor legjobban hitte, hogy erővel, akaratból cselekszik? S mintha kétfelől húzzák a marionett zsinórját: mozdulatlan maradt.²⁷³

In this instance, Kerbolt's moral position is the same as Mr Tulkinghorn's. Despite their 'enviable' positions, they are both captives of their commitments. (Tulkinghorn is committed to the family reputation of the Dedlocks).²⁷⁴

The next scene starts the following morning and takes place at the town-hall.

Madár has been working and worrying all night. He learns that a burglary had been committed the previous night; and despairs over the matters that have been raised against him. He falls into deeper despair because he thinks the real cause of his own fall is his affair with Ilona.

Kerbolt's morning forms a pair with Madár's. The description of the morning town is romantically ugly. The dereliction and the industrial dirt frames the solitariness of a desolate human being. Here *Kártyavár* is a hypertext not only of *Hard Times*, but also *Bleak House*:

Oly barátságtalan szürke hajnal volt ez és egy aszfalt volt az ég is, nedves aszfalt a föld, mikor Kerbolt tanácsos hazamenekült. Szegény, alélt, éjjeli lények fordultak haza a sárban, undok, barna generálszaftjában a kemény városnak. És villanyosok, az első villanyosok, munkásvonatok, gyűrött, fekete emberek zsúfolt tartányai, zúgtak, sívítottak, sebtén, szigorúan.²⁷⁵

²⁷³ 'He, who has always loved character, could now see the power of fate and situation against which one cannot fight. A puppet, that is what everyone is; a puppet. Has he not always been a puppet; a puppet of his circumstances when he most believed that he was acting with strength and will power? And as if someone were pulling the cord of the puppet in two directions, he remained still', *Kártyavár* (1997), p. 278.

²⁷⁴ See Charles Dickens, *Bleak House* (1948), p. 581.

²⁷⁵ 'This was such an unfriendly grey dawn, and even the sky was *one* piece of asphalt, and the ground was wet asphalt when councillor Kerbolt had escaped home. Poor, and weak night-creatures turned towards home in the mud; in the disgusting, brown gravy of the hard town. And the first trams, the bearers of workers; the vessels of worn, black people, swished and screamed past fast and tight',

A potential source paragraph from *Bleak House*:

On the banks of the stagnant channel of mud which is the main street of Tom-all-Alone's, nothing is to be seen but the crazy houses, shut up and silent. No waking creature save himself appears, except in one direction, where he sees the solitary figure of a woman sitting on a door-step [...] she gives no heed to his steps as he comes towards her.²⁷⁶

Kerbolt's self-derision is in contrast to the idyllic scene of his garden; his dream of being a peaceful landowner with a loving wife, and the illusion that the previous night had only been a dream. He feels that he has compromised himself; destroyed other people, and has not done anything for the town either. He bitterly praises Madár's cunning unscrupulousness. He deems that the world does not run according to moral principles, and that Madár at least has done something for the town. To describe Madár's administration, he uses the metaphor of the watering can whose outpouring stream of water is tamed by its rose. The use of this metaphor draws on George Meredith's prose.²⁷⁷ Madár is also described as a spider; a gardener, and a puppeteer.

Partos's awakening and matutinal wandering this same morning provide an account of all the town's main buildings, and eventually lead the reader back to the town hall. Here he finds that queues of people are waiting for him. Kerbolt deals with the problems of the populace. Madár wants to see Partos to enlist his support. Partos wants to explain the loss of his documents. Madár wants to get him to buy a villa in order to secure his money for the town. While this is going on, the events of the previous night are revealed through the *naïve* excuses of Partos, and the accounts of the journalists. Madár's shady dealings are revealed which makes him imagine that

Kártyavár (1997), p. 291.

²⁷⁶Charles Dickens, *Bleak House* (1948), p. 628.

²⁷⁷Meredith was one of Babits's favourite prose writers. Babits translated XX-XXI., and XXVII chapters of *The Egoist*. I will analyse this connection in detail in *Halálfiat*.

everything he has built up is about to collapse. The farcical quality of the scene all but disappears. In the description of the dialogue between Madár and Kerbolt, the narrator places the emphasis on the moral evaluation of the characters and their world:

A kezem piszkos, de a sárpalota kész; egy kis idő kell még, felszárítja a nap, bevakoljuk, senki sem fogja mondani, sárból van. [...] Kár ezért a mindenért? Omoljon össze, dőljön szét! úgy épült. Sárból épült. Én magam volnék az első, aki szétrúgnám... ezt a piszkos építményt! Hogy magam is segítetttem építeni? A rab Sámson talán maga építette a palotát, amit később magára temetett!²⁷⁸

Kerbolt's monologue shows his despair: 'A magafajta *nehezek* pedig, éppen mert nagyon kínos igyekezettel tiszták akarnak maradni, előbb-utóbb bebonyolódnak a mocsokba.—és megfulladnak benne'.²⁷⁹ Similar imagery, and self-torturing moral

dilemmas are also characteristic of Dickens's novels:

'And I am to hide my guilt, as I have done so many years?'
'As you have done so many years. I should not have made that reference myself, Lady Dedlock, but I may now remind you that your secret can be no heavier to you than it was, and is no worse and no better than it was. I know it certainly, but I believe we have never wholly trusted each other'.²⁸⁰

By this stage Kerbolt is completely broken. He hates Madár, and Madár despises him for his weakness, which has now been revealed to him. The description of the streets as Kerbolt goes back home incorporates key metaphors of the novel:

Kerbolt szinte látta, amint végigment az uccán, hogy inganak már a házak, a nagy Kártyaváros ijesztő házai, mint cifra skatulyák egy csiricsaré üzlet polcain, amiket hirtelen rakott egymás tetejére egy gyorskezü segéd. Még most, vasárnap délben is ott úszott a napban a finom por és szén, zsivalygott a lárma, nagy csata dúlt a Pestre induló villamosok körül.²⁸¹

²⁷⁸ 'My hands are dirty but the mud-palace is finished; it only needs a little time, and the sun will dry it out; we will whitewash it, and none will be able to tell that it is made of mud. [...] Shall it be a pity? Let it crumble and collapse, as it has been built without foundation. It has been built of mud. I would be the first one to kick this dirty construction to pieces! You say I helped build it myself? Did the captive Samson build the palace that he pulled down on himself?' *A Kártyavár* (1997), pp. 304–09.

²⁷⁹ 'And the *heavy ones* of his kind, especially because they desperately struggle and want to remain clean, sooner or later become covered in filth and suffocate', *ibid.*, p. 336.

²⁸⁰ Charles Dickens, *Bleak House* (1948), p. 581.

²⁸¹ 'As he was walking down the street, Kerbolt could almost see the houses sway, like fancy boxes of

The source of this explicitly intertextual description is *Bleak House*:

It is a dull street under the best conditions; where the two long rows of houses stare at each other with that severity, that half-a-dozen of its greatest mansions seem to have been slowly stared into stone, rather than originally built in material. It is a street of such dismal grandeur, so determined not to condescend to liveliness, that the doors and windows hold a gloomy state of their own in black paint and dust, and the echoing mews behind have a dry and massive appearance.²⁸²

Babits's transposition of the dismal grandeur of the greatest mansions into 'cifra gyűfáskatulyák' is an ingeniously meaningful one. His animation of the rows of houses as the work of a hand is clever and more poetic than Dickens's. He nevertheless keeps the image of the pervasive dirty dust.

Partos parts with his money which the narrator depicts with irony. He is taken to a restaurant to celebrate his spending and his behaviour here is portrayed as silly. On Sunday afternoon Partos realizes that he has invested his money in a system that is about to collapse, and compares himself to Macbeth whose undeservedly tragic situation is too much for him to bear.²⁸³ Partos has lunch with Kovács, his wife and five children, who go to the cinema afterwards. Madár receives a blackmail letter summoning him to the bank of the river that night.²⁸⁴ The sons of the town's leadership play football. Ilona travels on the tram along the long wall of the cemetery to meet Madár in Budapest. Kerbolt goes to the country. He meets Újhegyi, the

matches which have been suddenly stacked up by a shop-assistant on the shelves of a gaudy shop; he could see the buildings of the huge card-town sway. Even now at noon on Sunday, the fine dust and coal were floating in the air, and there was a huge battle around the trams leaving for Pest', *Kártyavár* (1997), p. 336.

²⁸²Charles Dickens, *Bleak House* (1948), p. 653. While the street in *Kártyavár* is animated by the eye of the onlooker, in Dickens it is animated by the narrator's metaphors. Babits, nevertheless, uses the same metaphors of impersonation as Dickens.

²⁸³*Kártyavár* (1997), p. 338.

²⁸⁴Blackmail is a recurring motif in many Dickens novels. One example is Lady Dedlock's and Mr Tulkinghorn's mutual blackmail of each other: 'I am to remain on this gaudy platform, on which my miserable deception has been so long acted, and it is to fall beneath me when you give a signal?' she said slowly', Charles Dickens, *Bleak House* (1948), p. 580.

painter who tells him that in the future golden age people will fly aeroplanes, and make love freely in the open air. In the meanwhile, Kerbolt becomes ever more self-critical. Finally he concludes in his monologue that the genius loci is the source of all problems. After his trip to the country he returns in the evening to find Hirschfeld's workers demonstrating against Madár. The workers resemble those in *Hard Times*, and the unscrupulousness of the speaker, Szulimán, is like the ranting demagogue, Slackbridge.²⁸⁵ (The unjustly treated worker such as Stephen Blackpool or Joe in *Bleak House* does not exist in any of Babits's novels.) All these episodes take place more or less simultaneously, include much silly gossip and verge sometimes even on burlesque.

'Régi kőhöz'²⁸⁶ restaurant is situated on the outskirts of the town. The description of the enigmatic meanings of its location is a hypertext of 'Stone Lodge' in *Hard Times*.²⁸⁷

A 'régi kőhöz' címzett vendéglő Újváros és Rakonca határán áll: itt látták Kerboltot ozsonnatájt. Újvárost és Rakoncát a vasút választja el. Ott a széntörmelékkal elegyes por között, kopik a 'régi kő', egyik oldalára RAKONCA van írva, a másikra PEST. Maradvány Turteltaub előtti időkből, mikor még Újváros nem létezett.²⁸⁸

The contrast between Nature as it is longed for by Kerbolt, and polluted urban environment has its textual root in *Hard Time*.²⁸⁹

The next scene is set in Hirschfeld's house. An exclusive dinner takes place where the performers from the concert, the vicar, a Jesuit priest, and the Secretary of State are present. As in Mrs Sparsit's tea in *Hard Times*, the different stages of the

²⁸⁵See Charles Dickens, *Hard Times* (1995), 141-49.

²⁸⁶'The old Stone', *ibid.*, p. 349.

²⁸⁷Charles Dickens, *Hard Times* (1995), p. 18.

²⁸⁸'The restaurant', 'To the old stone' stands on the outskirts of Újváros and Rakonca: this is where Kerbolt was seen at around tea-time. Újváros and Rakonca are separated by the railway. There, the coal slag mixes with dust and wears away the 'old stone', one side of which is inscribed RAKONCA and the other PEST, a remnant of the time when Újváros did not exist', *Kártyavár* (1997), p. 349.

²⁸⁹See for example the description of Coketown: Charles Dickens, *Hard Times* (1995), pp. 115-16.

meal are in parallel with different subjects of the conversation. Hirschfeld is like Bunderby because of his occupation, a factory owner, and because he rules by the power of money. Hirschfeld is Jewish and seems not only to be above politics, but also to be above the reality of the town. Even before Madár arrives Hirschfeld makes it clear that he will not help Madár, and even if the whole establishment collapses, he and his factory would survive. Hirschfeld is called a '*selfmademan*' by Babits.²⁹⁰ It is important to comment on this reference because it designates the English cultural background of Hirschfeld and his family. English economic terms are a feature a Babits's prose. I will write about this subject again in my chapter on *Halálfiat*. Should one read *Kártyavár* as a description of *condition Hongroise*, Babits presents Hirschfeld as the only successful man in the country.

Hirschfeld, however, is the only man in *Kártyavár* who is genuinely committed to his family. He has a cultured household; a wife who is a good hostess and two daughters with fashionable names: Alice, such as Elemér's class-mate was in *A gólyakalifa*, and Maud. Unlike in Hungary, these two names were popular in nineteenth-century Britain. Babits may have well been inspired by Tennyson's and Lewis Carroll's protagonists.²⁹¹ They show the English orientation of the Jewish capitalist family and the roots of Babits's prose. One must also add that when Madár leaves Hirschfeld's house Maud calls him 'a Pitt',²⁹² and Alice 'a Richelieu'. Alice

²⁹⁰*Kártyavár* (1997), p. 360.

²⁹¹Babits might have also known about Queen Maud. 'We know that Queen Maud was the daughter of St. Margaret. Ordericus may well have obtained his knowledge that Agatha, St Margaret's mother was 'filia regis Hunorum' by very direct channels', Sándor Fest, *Skóciai St Margittól a walesi bárdokig: magyar-angol történelmi és irodalmi kapcsolatok* (Budapest: Univerzítás, 2001), p. 552.

²⁹²In the 'Uses of Great Man' Emerson mentions Pitt as 'Hero the shouts in the street! The people cannot see him enough. They delight in a man. Here is a head and a trunk! What a front! what eyes! Atlantean shoulders, and the whole carriage heroic, with equal inward force to guide the great machine', *The Complete Prose Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (London: Ward, Lock, n. d.), p. 164. A brief description on William Pitt (1748-1763) can be found in Lord Elton, *Imperial Commonwealth* (London:

likes her independence. Maud is idealistic and is principally keen on a Hungarian nationalist cause.

The description of the town here is, again, a hypertextual transposition from

Hard Times:

Ó, micsoda vasárnap este volt! Mintha a por magába szívta volna a nappali fényt és meleget, és most piszkosan, szürkén, élesen izzadná szét a levegő minden parányából. Máskor a lámpák fényei megáztatják és föloldják a port: most késtek a lámpák, és sem sötét, sem világos nem tudott lenni igazán.²⁹³

The moral connotation of dirt, dust, and fog following the previous passage is now closely following Dickens's descriptions of similar environments:

—Szén—mondta a bíró, s úgy érezte, hogy szennyesen ég az egész város. Különös lányok és fiúk álltak és kószáltak a sarkokon, mindenki gyanús volt, a bűn szaga érzett a város közepén. Az alkony sárga csíkokat húzott szét a házak fölött, melyek megragadtak és megfeneklettek a porban, mintha ködbe ragadtak volna.²⁹⁴

Hersey is one of the leaders of the workers' demonstration which takes place this night. Kerbolt is seen here as a mysterious outsider watching from a distance. The crowd is attacked by the police who happen to be there as a result of a misunderstanding. Partos, who is with Kovács, derides the crowd for no apparent reason and becomes accidentally injured. Kovács takes Partos to Újhegyi's party from here.

In a separate episode, Madár's evening is described. He goes to the bank of the

Collins, 1945), pp. 131-38. One cause of Babits's comparison of Madár to Pitt is that they were both strategists. Maud's comparison of the Hungarian mayor to Pitt at this stage of the novel is flattering and naïve since later Madár will turn out to be a strategist without either a sound moral foundation or a realistic approach.

²⁹³ 'What a Sunday night that was! As if the dust had sucked the day light and warmth into itself, and dirtily, greyly, and sharply sweated every tiny particle out of the air. At other times the light of the street-lamps soak up and dissolve the dust: on this occasion the lamps had been lit late, and could shed neither light nor leave darkness', *Kárvavár* (1997), p. 369.

²⁹⁴ 'Coal, said the judge, and felt that the whole town was burning filthily. Strange boys and girls roamed around the corner, everyone was suspicious, and the smell of sin was perceivable in the middle of the town. The twilight drew yellow stripes on the houses, which became stranded in the dust, as if they had been glued onto fog', *ibid.*, p. 369.

Danube to meet the blackmailers who are to surrender compromising documents. He is with a journalist. The documents arrive. They chase the courier who first takes the tram, and then gets onto the train on which Madár first spots Brilliant then Vilma. The train leaves for Vienna. Madár is unable to stop it. He denies that he has seen Brilliant, but an outsider confirms that he has. This incident becomes manipulated by all the participants, and is turned against Madár. After the train leaves, Madár feels helpless and like a 'puppet', goes to Kerbolt's house where no one is at home, and after the inserted description of Újhegyi's party, one finds him at the town-hall. His thoughts about his imminent fall are mostly monologues reported by the narrator.

Having left the train from Budapest and having found no one at home, Ilona is taken to a party by Mrs Újhegyi. On the way to the party, Ilona wants to go into a church in which someone is preaching war in the name of Christ. The premises of the party is an old church-conversion. This is Újhegyi's home. The way Ilona goes further and further into the house resembles Harthouse's penetration of Bounderby's house. Most dance drunk and are out of control at the party. Vilmos Nagy-Tatár, retired captain and journalist, nibbles a sandwich. This is important to mention, because Babits italicises the original English spelling of this word.²⁹⁵ His use of *sandwich*, again, draws attention to Babits's original sources.

The time of the party is referred to by Újhegyi as the 'night of the apocalypse'. Its description has a farcical quality which develops into grotesque. This is an interesting carnivalesque subtext from a psychological point of view. Partos is flabbergasted, and becomes worried after having lost his cash at cards. He realises

²⁹⁵ *Sandwiches* were named after their inventor Lord John Montagu Sandwich (1718-92). He was First Lord of the Admiralty under both Henry Pelham and Lord North (1748-51, 1771-82). See *The Cambridge Encyclopedia*, ed. David Crystal (Cambridge, New York: C. U. P., 1990), p. 1064.

that he might even lose his deposit on the villa in the case of Madár's fall. Ilona is frightened, disgusted and tries to get rid of the attention of the aggressive painter, Újhegyi. She leaves on her own and arrives home early in the morning.

Next morning Kerbolt disappears under mysterious circumstances. The description of the town's outskirts shows explicit intertextuality with *Hard Times*.

Babits's text:

Gyalog és villamoson, mindenfelé a gyárakba siető embereket látni, akik közt szórványosan tarkul egy-egy 'pancamári' fehér hátibugyrával s az elül rákötözött nagy tejeskannával. A gyárkémények tutulnak s a fekete hangyaemberek csapatokban viszik-viszik kis fekete szerszámtáskáikat [...] Az éjjel jó. De a reggel sivár. A reggel hideg: reggel a fű nedves, a föld kemény, derekad fáj és hátad didereg. A reggel proletár, szürke és füst szagú. A reggel kioltja a csillagokat. Reggel indulnak a villamosok.²⁹⁶

The hypotext from Dickens:

The lights in the great factories, which looked, when they were illuminated, like Fairy palaces—or the travellers by express-train said so—were all extinguished; and the bells had rung for knocking off for the night, and had ceased again; and the Hands, men and women, boy and girl, were clattering home. [...] It was a wet night, and many groups of young women passed him, with their shawls drawn over their bare heads and held close under the chimneys to keep the rain out.²⁹⁷

It is again the 'patterns of poverty' whose description Babits transposes. In this case it is not the desolation of a solitary individual but a group of people linked by their similar positions in life.

At dawn Ilona cannot find her husband at home. She delivers the letter he left behind for Madár. Her action takes the story-line back to the town hall which is busy. Madár tries his best to keep everything under control. Ampenszán insists on seeing

²⁹⁶ 'People can be seen hurrying to factories on foot and trams everywhere; occasionally a peasant woman colours the crowd with a white bundle on her back and a milk can tied onto her front. The factory chimneys sound their sirens, and the black ant people carry their little black tools in their bands. [...] The night is good, but the morning is bleak. The morning is cold, and in the morning the grass is wet; the ground is hard; [...] The trams start running in the morning', *Kártyavár* (1997), p. 404.

²⁹⁷ Charles Dickens, *Hard Times* (1995), p. 69.

him because of a serious breach of the peace that had taken place in the cemetery.

The assembling of the committee that is to examine Madár's administration has a farcical mock-heroic character.²⁹⁸ The episode in which the select few set out to go to the town hall is another example of mock heroic:

Elindultak, gyalog mentek. Borgóz és a tegnapi Vnuk hangulata kavargott az epikus menet körül. *Polgárok* voltak most, vonulva a Capitoliumra, atavisztikus akcióban, ez államalkotó nép igaz gyermekei.²⁹⁹

The arrival of the procession is a key scene in the novel:

De a percek léptek, s egy ment jött, hasonló azon régi, allegórikus menetekhez, melyeket az ÓRA bocsátott magából, művészibb korokban: középkori mesterek remekei, a vénséges Idő, a halál kaszával, a Sors és Büntetés.³⁰⁰

Hersey refers to Herbert Spencer and talks about how the English authorities guard the honesty of English administration in his speech at the town council meeting. The allusion to Spencer and the English system is relevant because the example it presents is in sharp contrast with the anarchical state of Újváros. Babits's allegorised satirical representation of anarchy draws on the conventions of the carnivalesque tradition here. This is highly uncommon in Hungarian literature. Apart from European medieval and Renaissance roots, its closest English root is Carlyle. It aims to show how extraordinary the English ideals are in Újváros.³⁰¹ The farcical tone and the

²⁹⁸Examples of this device can be found in, for example, Dickens's *Pickwick Papers*: 'The constructive device of a club could pitch the tone at the secretarial level of its minutes, with Boz presenting himself as their editor, and drawing on his background as a reporter to produce a style which combines the scholarly transaction of the parliamentary proceeding. The effect is so extravagantly mock-heroic, when the opening chapter records a meeting, that the mockery gets out of hand', Harry Levin 'The Uncles of Dickens', in *The Worlds of Victorian Fiction* (1975), p. 10.

²⁹⁹'They set out; went on foot; wine-vapour and the atmosphere of last night at the Vnuk pub whirled around the epic procession. At this moment they were *citizens* proceeding to the Capitol in an atavistic action, the true children of people *constituting a state*', *Kárvavár* (1997), p. 413.

³⁰⁰'The minutes speeded up, and a procession arrived just like those old allegorical processions which a CLOCK sent whirling in more artistic ages: the masterpieces of medieval masters; old FATHER TIME; death with a scythe; Fate and Punishment', *ibid.*, p. 419.

³⁰¹Spencer was fashionable amongst the young Babits and his friends: *Babits Mihály levelezése 1890-1906* (1998), pp. 72, 76, 91, 110, 114, 156, 423. One can find references to him, again, in Babits's semi autobiographical novel: *Halálfiái* where the students read his works. Spencer's ideals inspired the

parody of the previous night's concert gradually diminishes. An unreasonable enthusiasm at Madár's failure, and concerns about the future in the case of his fall replace the satire.

Madár's fall concludes his portrayal. The failure of his town building project makes him an anti-Aeneas and that of his story an anti-*The Aeneid*. Before the meeting he feels like Napoleon before Waterloo. During the meeting he comes to terms with resigning his post. The letter in which Kerbolt leaves all his responsibilities to Madár reassures Madár. What really hurts Madár is the collapse of his town building project:

S talán ő volt az egyetlen itt, akit ez a csapás anyagilag is súlyosan érintett, akinek a maga és családja megélhetése vált problematikusává. Madár mégsem ezekre gondola, hanem terveire, a Jövő tornyos épületeire melyek egyszerre összeomlottak, mielőtt még megépülhettek volna.³⁰²

conception of *A kártyavár*, since the description of the town's administration is a mock version (travesty and burlesque of his ideas, Genette, *Palimpsests* (1997), pp. 22. 25: 'But here, where the king, though regarded as having divine approval was not held to be of divine descent, and where, though usually nominated by a predecessor he was sometimes practically elected by the senate, and always submitted to the form of popular ascent, the consultative body presently became supreme. "The senate had in course of time been converted from a corporation intended merely to advise the magistrates, into a board commanding the magistrates and self-governing." Afterwards "the right of nominating and cancelling senators originally belonging to the magistrates was withdrawn from them;" and finally, "the irremovable character and life-tenure of the members of the ruling order who obtained seat and vote, was definitely consolidated"; the oligarchic constitution became pronounced', 'Consulative Bodies', in Herbert Spencer, *Collected Writings*, 12 vols. (Routledge/ Thoemmes, 1996), viii: *Political Institutions*, p. 411.

³⁰² And perhaps he was the only one here whose existence was hard hit by this blow, and for whom his own and his family's material survival had been at stake. It was not this, however, that hurt him, but the destruction of his plans: the castles of the Future which had suddenly collapsed before they could be built', *Kártyavár* (1997), p. 424.

2.5 Heroism and predestination—history and place

The individual's responsibility for the improvement of society and his dependence on it are main preoccupations of Babits in *Kártyavár*. Many of Babits's ideas connected with this theme originate in the works of English writers.

Macaulay's³⁰³ essay on Bacon (1837) is based on the concept that the individual is dependent on the spirit of his age. (Babits's quotation from Bacon in his article on Pál Hegedűs³⁰⁴ shows that, such as Macaulay, he was also interested in Bacon and his ideas). Macaulay writes about Bacon's generation:

It is impossible to deny that they committed many acts which would justly bring on a statesman of our time censures of the most serious kind. But when we consider the state of morality in their age, and the unscrupulous character of the adversaries against whom they had to contend, we are forced to admit that it is not without reason that their names are still held in veneration by their countrymen.³⁰⁵

This deliberation is a source of the moral theme of *Kártyavár*. It concerns the individual's limited options to preserve his integrity in an unwholesome political establishment.

Thackeray, whose intellect Babits admired in his youth,³⁰⁶ was also preoccupied with the individual's options in society and history. Thackeray's review on Carlyle's *French Revolution* in *The Times* (3 August 1837) manifests his interest. Thackeray, such as Carlyle, saw titles as labels, and disliked the burden that social categorisation placed on man even more than Carlyle.

³⁰³The first reference one finds to Macaulay in Babits's works is in 'Shakespeare egyénisége' (1909), in *Esszék és tanulmányok* (1978), i, p. 65. Babits compares the critic, Pál Gyulai's style to that of Macaulay in his essay 'Petőfi és Arany' (1910), in *ibid.*, p. 162.

³⁰⁴See introduction p. 8. Even if Babits knew Macaulay's works before becoming a friend of Hegedűs's, their acquaintance with each other must have strengthened Babits's interest in Macaulay and in the individual's role in history. See Macaulay, Babington Thomas, *The Complete Works of Lord Macaulay*, ed. n. n., 12 vols. (London: Longmans; Green, 1898), i-vi: *History of England* (1898).

³⁰⁵Thomas Babington Macaulay, 'Francis Bacon', in *Critical and Historical Essays* ed. A. J. Grieve, 2 vols. (London: Dent; New York: Dutton, 1961), ii, pp. 296-97.

³⁰⁶See footnote 11.

Both Marlborough and the Pretender are sham-heroes in *Henry Esmond* (1852), and there is not a hero in *Vanity Fair* (1848) either. The highest merit of a man in these two novels is being a pious and loyal gentleman, such as either the eponymous hero of *The History of Henry Esmond* or Captain Dobbin in *Vanity Fair*. By Thackeray's standard of gentlemanly conduct, neither Madár nor Hirschfeld could even aspire to be regarded as one. Madár is morally unwholesome, and Hirschfeld is without public charity.

J. S. Mill, whose works Babits read for his own pleasure at university,³⁰⁷ also considered the individual's place and role in society and history. In 'On Liberty' (1859) one of his concerns is the proportion of the individual's dependence on society, and society's dependence on the individual. Concerning Carlyle, he claims that heroes can only exist in a well educated, sensible society: 'The honour and glory of the average man is that he is capable of following an initiative; that he can respond internally to wise and noble things, and be led to them with his eyes open'.³⁰⁸ Mill did not consider the society he lived in as being able either to produce or follow heroes. He also writes in 'On Liberty': 'In sober truth, whatever homage may be professed, or even paid, to real or supposed mental superiority, the general tendency of things throughout the world is to render mediocrity as the ascendant power among mankind'.³⁰⁹ Mill did not, however, class this deficient state of the world as either hopeless or hopeful but treated it as a problem which is to be solved by the education of people.

³⁰⁷Babits applications of ideas from John Stuart Mill, *Analysis of the Phenomena of the Human Mind* (1829) is best shown in Babits's verse. Babits also had *On Liberty and the Subjection Women* (Leipzig, 1917) in his library.

³⁰⁸J. S. Mill, 'On Liberty', in *Utilitarianism, Liberty, Representative Government* (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1954), p. 124.

³⁰⁹*Ibid.*, p. 123.

Ralph Waldo Emerson who was another thinker Babits liked to read as a student, also made his contribution to the issue of the individual's role and options in history or society.³¹⁰ He manifested his optimism in an abstract moral framework. He regarded people who can fulfil their potentials and thus better their environment links in a positive historical process:

The history of the universe is symptomatic, and life is mnemonical. No man, in all the procession of famous men, is reason or illumination, or that essence we are looking for; but is an exhibition of some quarter of new possibilities.[...] Yet within the human education and agency, we may say, great men exist that there maybe greater men. The destiny of organized nature is amelioration, and who can tell its limits.³¹¹

Napoleon as a man of the world is, much as in Carlyle, the last of Emerson's chosen heroes in his selection of *The Representatives of Mankind* (publication: 1850). Emerson calls Napoleon a child of destiny who is unique on the one hand and the product of the world he lives in, on the other.³¹² Emerson's conclusion is that Napoleon was an intellect without conscience. Therefore the result of his vast talent and power was the demoralisation of Europe³¹³ instead of the spiritual leadership of mankind which would ideally be a hero's role. Emerson's approach to heroes in history resembles Mill's in being didactic rather than judgemental.

Thackeray, Mill, Emerson, Dickens and Babits all read and transposed ideas and wording from Carlyle. Dickens inscribed *Hard Times* to Thomas Carlyle, and said about his dedication: 'I would not flourish to you if it were not the nature of me'.³¹⁴ Babits alleged he had read all Carlyle's works. He applies Carlyle's attitude to the individual's role in history to literature in his 'Az irodalom elmélete', and quotes: 'A

³¹⁰Babits had an 1903 edition of Emerson's *Representative Men* in his library. See more on Babits's reading of Emerson in György Rába, *Babits Mihály költészete* (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1981), p. 37.

³¹¹*The Complete Prose Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (n. d.), pp. 168-69.

³¹²*Ibid.*, p. 216.

³¹³*Ibid.*, p. 222.

³¹⁴The quotation is taken from: Michael Goldberg, *Carlyle and Dickens* (Athens, G A: University of Georgia Press, 1972).

történelem igazi csodája a nagy emberek születése³¹⁵ from *Heroes*. Babits also gives an individual summary of *Heroes* (1841) in *Az európai irodalom története*.³¹⁶

In Carlyle's sketch of the process of history the particular age shapes its hero. As the passing of history approaches Carlyle's own contemporary reality, the ages allow less and less scope of action for heroic personalities. Napoleon is the final hero and the second modern 'king' after Cromwell. Carlyle summarises his character thus: 'There was an eye to see in this man, a soul to dare and do. He rose naturally to be a King. All men saw that he was such'.³¹⁷ The charlatan elements in his character, nevertheless, got the upper hand in him and, within the category of the hero, Carlyle classifies him as a liar. It was his punishment that he became unable to tell a truth from a lie, which had made his period altogether flawed. Carlyle thus describes Napoleon's age as being as false as a bulletin. Although the age shapes the character; a mendacious age is no excuse for being a mendacious man according to Carlyle: 'A man in no case has liberty to tell lies. It had been in the long run better for Napoleon too if he had not told any'.³¹⁸ The final consequence of Napoleon's flaws is the complete collapse of his work and universe:

A Lie is *no*-thing; you cannot of nothing make something; you make nothing at last and lose your labour into the bargain.[...] He was mistaken like a man that should build upon cloud: his house and he fall down in confused wreck, and depart out of the world.³¹⁹

The most remarkable feature of Carlyle's moral judgement is that although he condemns Napoleon, he still gives him the benefit of the doubt that deep down his

³¹⁵'the wonder of history is the birth of great heroes', Mihály Babits, 'Az irodalom elmélete' in *Esszék és tanulmányok* (1978), i, p. 607.

³¹⁶Mihály Babits, *Az európai irodalom története* (1979), pp. 366-67.

³¹⁷Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-worship, and the Heroic in History* (Berkeley; Los Angeles; Oxford: University of California Press, 1993), p. 206.

³¹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 204.

³¹⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 204-7.

motives were sincere: ‘Yet Napoleon *had* a sincerity; we are to distinguish what is superficial and what is fundamental in insincerity’.³²⁰ Carlyle’s conception of Napoleon could well have been Babits’s model for Madár; Madár’s work, role and fate in his world and history.³²¹ Madár’s sincerity and insincerity make him precisely like Carlyle’s Napoleon. He has his roots in the French ‘hero’.

2.6 The closing of *Kártyavár*

The last chapter of *Kártyavár* completes the game motif of the introductory chapter. It condenses most themes and metaphors of the novel into a surrealistic ending.

Kártyavár’s end is thus, again, a hypertextual transposition of the clearing away of the files at the completion of the Jarndyce suit in *Bleak House*:

—Nincs semmi baj—mondta. A bábuk rendben működtek, és a tánc azért nem akadt meg. Ők persze nem tudják mire való. Mint a fogzás. Elég nagy fogak—pillantot Újváros házaira.—Fogzik ez az ország, s a fogzás lázzal jár. Még jó egypár lázon át kell esni. A fő, hogy a tánc meg ne akadjon. Ezek csak tejfogak; majd jön más jobb....Nem az én dolgom; az Úr tudja mit tesz. Én csak igazgatom a bábukat.³²²

Despite the resulting kinship one must repeatedly emphasise the contrast between the ending of *Kártyavár* and *Bleak House* from the point of view of animation. A transpositional trend I have been analysing is also valid in the ending. While in *Bleak House* life and its metaphors are both live and real, life and its description is only artificial and is artificially extended in *Kártyavár*:

³²⁰Ibid., p. 204.

³²¹Babits’s novel does refer to Napoleon and Waterloo in connection with Madár. The scene of references is the night after the burglary: ‘Napoleon volt, s itt állott Waterloo-val szemben’, ‘he was Napoleon, and faced Waterloo’, and ‘új cikket írt, két órát aludt, mint Napoleon Waterloo előtt’, ‘he wrote a new article, and slept two hours, like Napoleon before Waterloo’, *Kártyavár* (1997), p. 409.

³²²‘—It’s OK.—he said. The puppets work all right and the dance did not need to be halted. They obviously do not know what it is good for. It is like teething.—Big enough teeth—he said glancing at the houses of Újváros. This country is teething and its teething goes with fever. It has to go through quite a few more patches of fever. The main thing is that the dance must go on. These are only milk teeth and there will be something else...something better....It is not my concern; the lord knows what he is doing. I only direct the puppets’, *Kártyavár* (1997), p. 440.

Then, indeed, does she captivate all hearts by her condescension, by her girlish vivacity, and by her skipping about as in the days when the hideous old general with the mouth too full of teeth, had not cut one of them at two guineas each. [...] Then she is kind and cruel, stately and unassuming, various, beautifully wilful.³²³

Following the line of the main story, Ilona waits to meet Madár after the end of the meeting. Kerbolt is suspected of having committed suicide in the Rakonca woods and Ampenszán complains to Madár that the dead in the cemetery are disturbed by the sound of gun-fire. Madár, Ilona and Ampenszán go to the cemetery. All the main material components of the city are summarised as they drive past them. Emphasis is placed on the wastefulness of nature and the ever revolving machinery of the town. The cemetery's description resembles and merges with the town's and the disfigured tombstones signify past inhabitants. The dead in Újváros do not turn into plants but dust which connects them with certain principal characteristics of the town, such as dirt and unwholesomeness:

És kő és por, csupa por és kő minden; alig egy fa; a zöld, falusi temetők bája teljesen hiányzott itt. Újvárosiak nem válnak lombbá és levéllé haláluk után sem: hanem porrá: mely torkot fojt és tüdőre száll.³²⁴

The key role of the cemetery and the metaphors in this description show an explicit hypertextual transformation of the same scene in *Bleak House*:

Beyond it, was a burial-ground—a dreadful spot in which the night was very slowly stirring; but where I could dimly see heaps of dishonoured graves and stones, hemmed in by filthy houses, with a few dull lights at their windows, and on whose walls a thick humidity broke out like a disease.³²⁵

In both cases the cemetery sums up an irretrievable loss. Drawing upon its function in

³²³ Charles Dickens, *Bleak House* (1948), p. 875. Another example of Dickens's use of teeth in metaphors: 'To know that he is always keeping secret from her; that he has, under all circumstances, to conceal and hold fast a tender double tooth, which her sharpness is ever ready to twist out of his head; gives Mr. Snagsby, in her dentistical presence, much of the air of a dog who has a reservation from his master, and look anywhere rather than meet the eye', *ibid.*, 355.

³²⁴ 'Stone and dust; everything was stone and dust with hardly a single tree; the charm of country cemeteries was completely missing here. Even after their death, the inhabitants of Newtown did not turn into foliage and leaves but into dust which suffocates, and blocks the lungs', *Kártyavár* (1997), p. 430.

³²⁵ Charles Dickens, *Bleak House* (1848), p. 809.

Bleak House it signifies contagious filth and corruption in *Kártyavár* too.

A comparison of people with puppets is also woven into the final summary of *Kártyavár*'s themes. Madár says over Partos's corpse: 'holmi olcsó sors-sémákban élő-haló báb holttest'.³²⁶ The narrator links the process of administration as a game and its people as being puppets in the character of Madár: 'A polgármester leemelve kalapját, maga is bábuként, az imádságot és meghatottságot mímelve állt. Mímelve csak: mert Gyula úgy hevert ott mint egy elintézett akta'.³²⁷ Kerbolt is described as the victim of a war which links history with the game-motif and the story of the novel. Ilona is allocated the role of dolly and a piece of sculpture. Ampenszán is characterized as the most grotesque puppet.

This scene finishes with Madár catching sight of Kovács and Partos. Kovács and Partos are heading towards the cemetery to get the deposit on the furniture covers back from Ampenszán. The street scene with a vendor and children parallels the start of the novel. Two real accidents occur there at this stage, too. One is the death of an Italian worker, and the other is the death of a child run over by a tram. These do not only create a framework but draw up a parallel of accidents with the other deaths in the stench of the town. The carnivalesque approach culminates here and overtakes any other attitude entirely.

The metaphors and motifs of the accidents point to key concepts of the novel, such as 'CLOCK': TIME, FATE and 'punishment'. Here, these motifs, which are also central to Dickens's art, become closely interwoven with the theme of Providence and the game aspect of the novel.

³²⁶ 'the corpse of a puppet living and dying in fate's cheap schemes', *Kártyavár* (1997), p. 430.

³²⁷ 'Having taken his hat off, the mayor stood there like a puppet feigning prayer and emotion. He had, anyway, only been feigning it; because Gyula lay there like a file that had been sorted out', *ibid.*, p. 431.

The scenes above are closely linked with the appearance of a lorry with a skull and cross-bones on it which nearly hits Partos. This happens by the cemetery in sight of Madár's carriage. Partos's main worry is to get his money back from Mrs Ampenszán who is the only one they find at home.

After this digression the reader gets back to the main emblematic episode: 'S Partos feszélyezve s akarat nélkül indult meg zsinórbábulépteivel a holtak allóján'.³²⁸ Much to Ampenszán's indignation the lorry recurs, chasing him in diminishing circles, stopping over Kerbolt's corpse. The metaphor of the state of the cemetery pre-empted the complete catastrophe of the ending: 'A sírok össze-vissza voltak már taposva, és az egész temető széthányva. Keresztek eldőltek, márványok sérültek, nagyokat ütődve'.³²⁹ Then Ampenszán recognizes his boss as the driver, and is commanded to wrap Kerbolt's body in the national flag, which is then put into a coffin. Then Ilona goes paralysed; this is followed by Partos's death, who can smell certain flowers in his coffin which remind him of home. He is posted to his wife in the country. Then Kovács is described as a bladder-puppet and dies. Much like in Dickens's novels, everyone's death is in keeping with the personality they had when they were alive. The fact that Kerbolt is wrapped in a national flag invokes his commitment to a national-historical cause. After the description of the deaths of all these characters, selected tombstones dance in the order the lorry commands them and thus give the novel's ending an enigmatic and apocalyptic quality. At this final stage Ampenszán's string becomes exhausted which means that he has to die as well. Only Madár is to survive in the cemetery's dance macabre. The last sentence of

³²⁸ 'And Partos set out with the steps of a marionette; embarrassed and weak-willed along the road of the dead', *ibid.*, p. 437.

³²⁹ 'The graves were trampled all over, and the cemetery was turned up side-down. Crosses had fallen; marble slabs had been broken when hitting the ground hard', *ibid.*, p. 438.

Kártyavár condenses several metaphorical motifs to make the final statement of the novel: 'A növények táncoltak tovább a sírok fölött, a kövek mozdulatlan álltak, künn pedig Újváros nagy masinája forgott... A zajos uccákon semmi feltűnést sem keltett a Bábjátékos gépkocsija'.³³⁰

2.7 Conclusion

The excerpts from Babits's and Dickens's novels demonstrate that the story-lines of *Kártyavár*, *Hard Times* and especially *Bleak House* achieve their full meanings at their finishing scenes. The worlds *Kártyavár*, *Bleak House* and *Hard Times* describe, contain more hardships than happiness. The wide variety of characters that are made to act in relation to each other represent options the individuals have in particular circumstances that the worlds of these novels determine. Neither Dickens's nor Babits's world has a place for heroes. The greatest merit in Dickens is benevolence. Even this, however, can be misguided and finally triumph only in its own close sphere. Examples of this are Sissy, Mrs Pegler, Rachel, Esther, Woodcourt and Jarndyce. As opposed to Dickens's novels in which goodness makes everyone be in their place either in principle or even in reality, the world *Kártyavár* describes cannot be changed for the better or redeemed by the efforts of good individuals. The two potential heroes both fail in Babits's work: Kerbolt, becomes a victim of his own uncompromising self-torture. Madár survives but proves a failure and is finally put aside.

The discrepancy between the entirety and the concluding chapter of *Kártyavár*

³³⁰ 'The plants carried on dancing over the graves; the stones stood still, and outside revolved the huge machinery of Újváros... The lorry of the puppeteer caused no sensation in the loud streets', *ibid.*, p. 440.

exists either because Babits only finally decided to write a metatext which criticises Dickens, or more likely because he was unable to finish his originally Dickensian novel. The reason for this is that he did not have as much optimism as Dickens. The optimism of the English writer is expressed in the uncompromising well-meaning of some of his characters and in the positive outcome of their actions.

One source of the puppets in the last chapter of *Kártyavár* must have been the ending of *Vanity Fair*. Thackeray's disillusion with the human race found its form of expression in satire and in the un-heroic characters of *Vanity Fair*. Babits's disillusion had different causes from Thackeray's. His puppet scene at the end of *Kártyavár* also has its root in Tennyson's *Maud* (1855):

We are puppets, Man in his pride, and Beauty fair in her flower.
Do we move ourselves, or are we moved by an unseen hand at a game.
That pushes us off from the board, and others ever succeed?
Ah yet, we cannot be kind to each other here for an hour;
We whisper, and hint, and chuckle, and grin at a brother's shame.³³¹

The difference between Babits and Tennyson here is that Babits's disillusioned ending is not about the kind of ugliness that Tennyson saw in human existence. The meaning of Babits's enigmatic carnivalesque ending is that the town, meaning the country, is like a house of cards which is built without a solid foundation and has therefore collapsed. The cause of its collapse and the despair expressed in Babits's novel is the *genius loci*. All the domineering stylistic and thematic transpositions from the English works in Babits's novel show the difference between the *Kártyavár*'s world and the worlds of the source-texts.

³³¹ Tennyson's *Poetry*, ed. Robert W. Hill (London; New York: Norton, 1999), p. 314.

***Timár Virgil fia* (1919-1922) | CHAPTER 3**

3.1 Contents	116
3.2 Introduction to <i>Timár Virgil fia</i>	117
3.3 Babits's concept of Virgil as a classic and its parallel with T.S. Eliot	119
3.4 Virgil in Hungarian literary history	122
3.5 The classical and English origins of Babits's Virgilianism	129
3.6 The themes and compositional features of <i>Timár Virgil fia</i>	131
3.7 Virgilian and English sources of melancholy in Babits's novel	138
3.7.1 Sources of melancholy in <i>The Aeneid</i> and in <i>Timár Virgil fia</i>	138
3.7.2 Other classical and English sources of melancholy in Babits's novel	140
3.8 Virgil and Shakespeare in <i>Timár Virgil fia</i>	146
3.9 An interpretation of the novel on the basis of its Virgilian leitmotif	151
3.10 Conclusion	157

3.2 Introduction to *Timár Virgil fia*

Works that are based on and rewrite Virgil are not typical of Hungarian literature.

They become even rarer after the eighteenth century. Like its precursors, *A gólyakalifa* and *Kártyavár*, *Timár Virgil fia* stands out of its national literary history.

The reason for its singularity is not only its subject matter but also its attitude and tone. These latter two are mainly the consequences of its English sources.

The only extensive Hungarian study on this novel defines its attitude as melioristic. The author of this study, Béla G. Németh, approaches this novel from an almost entirely psychological point of view. He considers William James to be the root of meliorism in Babits's novel.³³² Béla G. Németh refers to James's *Pragmatism* (1907) in his 'Az Erősz teljességének vágya'. He writes:

Miszerint anélkül, hogy pesszimisták vagy optimisták lennénk, anélkül, hogy az embert eleve jónak vagy eleve rossznak tételeznénk föl, anélkül, hogy az abszolút jónak, az abszolút tökéletesnek, az abszolút teljességnek az elérését lehetőknek és elérhetőnek tartanánk, ha tevékenységünk személyes kapcsoló erkölcsiségével vagyunk jelen a világban a társaslétben,—egyre jobbak leszünk magunk, lesz tevékenységünk, lesz a világ, a társas lét.³³³

I will investigate earlier literary roots in connection with Babits's emotional and moral attitude and tone. These, however, do not exclude William James as one of Babits's theoretical source material. Béla G. Németh follows James's thoughts quite closely. James writes, 'Meliorism treats salvation as neither inevitable nor impossible. It treats it as a possibility, which becomes more and more a probability the more

³³²Babits studied James's works from at least 1904 onwards. György Rába analyses Babits's transposition of James's ideas in his *Babits Mihály költészete 1903-1920* (Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1981), pp. 54-56, 58-61, 68. See footnote 20.

³³³'One will not have to be a pessimist or an optimist, nor believe man to be originally good or evil, nor consider the attainability of absolute goodness, perfection and totality possible and within reach if one is present in this world and society through the wholesome morality of one's sociable personal activity. This can make not only us and our activity but also the world and our society improve', Béla G. Németh, *Babits, a szabadító* (Budapest: Tankönyv, 1987), p. 46.

numerous the actual conditions of salvation become'.³³⁴ Babits's novel testifies this belief. It also models Timár on the type of the tender minded. The tender minded are idealistic, noble, religious, dogmatic and intellectual according to William James. They are the opposite of the tough minded such as Vitányi. The tough minded are empirical, sensual, materialistic, irreligious and sceptical. Pragmatism provides a bridge between these two attitudes. According to Béla G. Németh, Pista represents a potential mixture of these two extremes.³³⁵ Timár's commitment to his vocation and absolute faith attests to Babits's belief in meliorism. The open-endedness of *Timár Virgil fia* also professes its author's faith in the pragmatic possibility of salvation. Babits's optimism is not as strongly argued as James's, however.

Virgil as a central subject matter places *Timár Virgil fia* in the classical and English adaptations of Virgilian themes including *The Aeneid*. The association of Virgil with the spirituality of Dante and St. Augustine illustrates an European-minded transformation of the Latin classic. The Virgilian and later Augustinian theme attests to an ethos that Babits professed in Hungary in 1919 and 1920.

The narrator of the novel is omniscient, and the narration is in third person singular. This book is less heteroglossial and dialogic than *Kártyavár*. In contrast to the satirical, farcical, and grotesque tone of Babits's version of an unsuccessful *The Aeneid*: *Kártyavár*, the dominant tone of this book is subdued. Béla G. Németh praises its 'hibátlan hangnemű stílusbiztonságát, tiszta logikájú szerkesztését, teljes hitetésű lélektanát'.³³⁶

³³⁴William James, *Pragmatism* (Cambridge Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 1975), p. 137.

³³⁵Németh, *Babits, a szabadító* (1987), p. 35.

³³⁶'its flawlessly consistent tone of style, the clear logic of its structure, and its fully credible psychology', *ibid.*, p. 33.

3.3 Babits's concept of Virgil as a classic and its parallel with T. S.

Eliot

Before examining how much of Babits's continuous attachment to Virgil originated in English literature, and how much of it came from purely Virgil, I will illustrate what Virgil really meant to Babits. The following quotation is from the section Babits devoted to Virgil in his *Az európai irodalom története*:

Vergiliust két erénye jelölte ki a nagy alkotásra. Az egyik magas és gáncstalan művészete. A másik a világ sorsán, Róma hivatásán való gyötrődése. [...] Egy egész nemzetet szimbolizálni egy reprezentatív hősből, egy nemzet sorsát egy ember végzetében: ez Vergiliusra várt. Az *Aeneis* az első nemzeti eposz a világon. S a többi mind ennek az utánpótlása. [...] Nemzeti és világirodalom egyszerre. [...] Életének nagy feladata pedig, hogy Trója ősei 'házi isteneit' tengeren és harcokon keresztül az épülő új városba átmentse. Ezek a házi istenek az állam szent hagyományainak, a kultúra folytonosságának a jelképei. Aeneas ennek a folytonosságnak a hőse. Igazi római hős, az állami kultúraé. A harc csak eszköz a számára, nem életeleme mint Akhilleuszé. Csak késlelteti és nehezíti hivatásának betöltését, akár a szerelem. Az egész *Aeneis* ennek a hivatásnak a története, s e késleltető akadályok elleni küzdelemé. A 'jámbor Aeneas' az első küldetéses hős a világirodalomban. Egész életét áldozatul kell hoznia nagy hivatásának. A fő-fő akadály a szerelem. Ez a ballaszt, amit ki kell dobni a hajóból. Ez az érzés, amelyből erőszakkal ki kell tépnie magát. A jámbor hős itt kegytelenné válik, s az olvasó egy királynői öngyilkosság tanúja. [...] A költő maga más múltat és jövőt akart evvel a szerelemmel összekapcsolni. A birodalom múltját és jövőjét. A szerelem a gyűlölet anyja itt is, mint Catullus-nál. A keleti királynő szerencsétlen szerelme Nyugat metropoliszának ősehez sötét végzetekkel terhes. Kelet és Nyugat szerelme ez, akik (mint egy modern világirodalom költője) énekli 'sohasem találkozhatnak'. Kipling versét írhatta volna egy római is. Róma világhatalmának sorsát a karthágói háborúk döntötték el.³³⁷ S Karthágót Dido alapította, mint Rómát Aeneas. [...] Ha Dante majdan, túlvilági útján, kísérőül választja Vergiliust: nemcsak azért tette, mert a mantuai *vates* is a pokolba szállt le hőseivel. Hanem azért választotta őt vezetőnek, mert mind a ketten ugyanazt az álmodást, ugyanazt az ideált vallották.

A világhatalom álmodást és ideálját. Egyetlen kard maradjon a földön, minden tartomány fölött magasan ragyogva, és biztosítson békét és fegyelmet. A gyengéd, szelíd költő, anyagtalan édességű versek zenésze, pásztorok, parasztok, szőlők és méhek és jámbor daliák poétája, aki legharciasabb jeleneteibe is bájos kisgyerekek, felejthetetlen holdas éjszakák és szerelmes asszonyok képeit szövi be: a

³³⁷The verse-line Babits refers to here is from *The Ballad of East and West* (1889) by Rudyard Kipling: 'Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet', See *A Choice of Kipling's Verse made by T. S. Eliot with an essay on Rudyard Kipling*, 3rd reprinted edn of 1963 edn. (London: Faber and Faber, 1973), pp. 111-16. One must add that Babits distorts the meaning of Kipling's verse here which is obvious when one reads the whole of Kipling's ballad.

világot átfogó római politika prófétája lett. S előfutára a Középkor nagy nemzetközi eszméjének, mely napjainkban is aktuális.³³⁸

Babits wrote *Az európai irodalom története* around 1932-1934. Babits looked upon Virgil, Dante, and Shakespeare as principal roots of European culture in *Az európai irodalom története*. T. S. Eliot looked upon Virgil as the fundamental classic of Europe and European civilization.³³⁹ He saw Dante as one of his descendants,³⁴⁰ and one who had bettered his master in certain ways.³⁴¹ He wrote about the outstanding merits of Shakespeare in connection with those of Dante.³⁴² Babits also compared

³³⁸ Art and national thought meet in Virgil, too. [...] It was Virgil's task to symbolise a whole nation in one representative ancestor, and that of its fate in the destiny of one man. *The Aeneid* is the first national epic in European literature. Those following it are all imitations of it. [...] It is part of a national and European literature simultaneously. [...] His life-long mission is to rescue the old "domestic gods", and to get them, through the trials of seas and wars, to the new town that is to be built. These household gods are symbols of sacred traditions of the state, and the continuity of civilisation. Aeneas is the hero of this continuity. He is a real Roman hero, the hero of ancient city-state culture. War is only a means for him, and not his life-principle, as it is for Achilles. Like love, it only postpones and acutely hinders him from fulfilling his mission. The whole of *The Aeneid* is a history of a struggle against delaying obstacles and of the fulfilment of this mission. The 'pious Aeneas' is the first missionary hero in literature. He has to sacrifice his entire life for the sake of his grand mission. The biggest obstacle is love. This is the ballast he must jettison. This is the emotion he has to tear out of himself by force. The pious hero becomes cruel here, and the reader witnesses a queen's suicide. [...] The poet himself wanted to link a different past and different future by this love; that of the past and future of the empire. As in Catullus, love is the mother of hatred. The unfortunate love of the Eastern queen towards the ancestor of the West forebodes a dark doom. This is a love between the East and the West, which (as a poet of a modern empire sang) "can never meet". Kipling's verse could have been written by a Roman. The fate of the Roman empire was determined by the Carthaginian wars. And Carthage was founded by Dido, as Rome was by Aeneas. This is the extent to which Aeneas symbolises the fate of Rome. [...] When Dante chose Virgil to be his escort in the under-world, it was not only for the reason that the Mantuan 'vates' had also descended into hell with his hero, but also because both Dante and Virgil had dreamt the same dream, and confessed the same ideal. Their ideal and dream were those of a world-empire so that there should be one sword in the world which, by shining over all the provinces, secured peace and order.

Virgil was also the gentle and meek poet; the poet musician of insubstantial sweetness; that of shepherds, peasants, vines, bees, and pious youths. He could weave the image of charming children; unforgettable moonlit nights, and women in love even into his most fierce scenes of battle, and not only became the prophet of the Roman world encompassing politics but also the forerunner of the great cosmopolitan ideal of the Middle Ages which speaks to us today', Babits, *Az európai irodalom története* (1979), pp. 70-72.

³³⁹ T. S. Eliot, 'What is a Classic?', in *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, ed. Frank Kermode (London: Faber, 1975).

³⁴⁰ 'Dante's debt to St. Thomas Aquinas, like his debt (a much smaller one) to Virgil, can be easily exaggerated;', T. S. Eliot, 'Dante', in T. S. Eliot, *Selected Essays* (London: Faber and Faber, 1999), p. 257.

³⁴¹ 'Virgil dismisses Dante, who henceforth shall proceed with a higher guide', T. S. Eliot, 'Dante', in *ibid.*, p. 261.

³⁴² 'Dante and Shakespeare divide the modern world between them; there is no third. [...] Shakespeare gives the greatest *width* of human passion; Dante the greatest altitude and greatest depth', T. S. Eliot,

Dante to Shakespeare in *Az európai irodalom története*. Babits claimed that Dante looked at the world from inside while Shakespeare viewed it from the outside.³⁴³ T. S. Eliot praised Shakespeare for ‘greater variety and detail, and gave Dante credit for his ‘universality’.³⁴⁴

A genetic link between Babits and T. S. Eliot is not easy to demonstrate but highly likely. Mihály Szegedy-Maszák rightly maintains that it is common practice to draw a parallel between Babits’s view of literary history and T. S. Eliot’s views on culture. Szegedy-Maszák deems that T. S. Eliot’s ‘Tradition and Individual Talent’ (1919) and Babits’s *Az európai irodalom története* are the best examples of this parallel. He rightly adds that Babits does not mention T. S. Eliot, the artist, in his *Az európai irodalom története*.³⁴⁵ Andor Németh, however, informs us that English periodicals such as the *Criterion* were available for the Hungarian readership in the library of the Baumgarten foundation in Budapest. According to his report he and Babits used to take turns in reading these publications.³⁴⁶

One must add that neither T. S. Eliot nor Babits had any affiliation with either the German or the Italian political aspirations of the nineteen-thirties. Babits looked upon Virgil and Dante as the representatives and upholders of a world empire,³⁴⁷ and Shakespeare as the property of all humankind.³⁴⁸ T. S. Eliot also looked upon Virgil,

‘Dante’, in *ibid.*, p. 265.

³⁴³ Babits, *Az európai irodalom története* (1979), p. 71.

³⁴⁴ T. S. Eliot, *Selected Essays* (London: Faber and Faber, 1999), p. 239.

³⁴⁵ Mihály Szegedy-Maszák, *Irodalmi kánonok* (Debrecen: Csokonai, 1998), pp. 16-17.

³⁴⁶ Andor Németh, *A szélén behajtvá* (Budapest: Magvető, 1973), p. 658.

³⁴⁷ ‘Nem véletlen választotta ennek a *pusztán emberi* tudásnak s művészetnek megismerőjéül Vergiliust, költőideálját. Aki “megsejtette a kereszténységet”, és hirdette a világmonarchiát...’, ‘He chose Virgil as the representative of exclusively human knowledge and art intentionally. The reason for his choice was that Virgil had a feeling of Christianity before its time, and promoted the idea of a world empire’, Babits, *Az európai irodalom története* (1979), p. 131.

³⁴⁸ ‘minden nagy író közül ő az, aki leginkább az egész világé’, ‘among all great authors, he is the one who is in the possession of the whole world to the greatest extent’, *Esszék és tanulmányok* (1978), i, p. 430.

Dante and Shakespeare as three of the greatest artists of European literature. Szegedy-Maszák maintains that Babits's European orientation is stronger than T. S. Eliot's.³⁴⁹

One must add that it is part of this feature that the Virgilian concepts of European civilisation are connected with the ideals of medieval cosmopolitanism in Babits's novel.

3.4 Virgil in Hungarian literary history

Although many Hungarian verse epics and prose works contain traces of Virgilian themes, Hungarian literary history and Hungarian literary consciousness are fundamentally un-Virgilian. The first Hungarian 'translation' of *The Aeneid* by Péter Huszti (Bártfa, 1582) is a protestant adaptation of Vergil's verse. It also contains reformulated parts from Ovid, Virgil's commentaries, and Biblical extracts such as the 7th book of Daniel. Huszti failed to observe the original classical metre. His anti-papal verse imitates the canticles of the age.³⁵⁰ In a *Régi magyar költők tára XVII. század*, *A Collection of Seventeenth-century Hungarian Poets* one can find many superficial applications of themes from *The Aeneid*. These use the particular themes as they suit their purpose. In love verses one finds: 'Aenésé mar az Dido,/ Az Parisé mar Helena,/ Légen példa zep Gismonda,/ Igaz ualla eö zerelme'.³⁵¹ In *Az Szent Iános Evangelista és Apostol Historaia* the writer uses the phrase: 'Ad notam Troianae

³⁴⁹'Kettejük közül Babits talán még egy árnyalattal erősebben is elkötelezte magát az európaiság mellett', Szegedy-Maszák, *Irodalmi kánonok* (1998), p. 17.

³⁵⁰*A magyar irodalom története*, ed. István Sőtér, 6 vols. (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1964-1966), i: *A magyar irodalom története 1600-ig*, ed. Tibor Klaniczay (1964), p. 535.

³⁵¹'Now Dido is Aeneas', / Helena is Paris', / Beatiful Gismonda, / The truth of her love', *Viragh Enec*, in *Régi Magyar költők tára XVII-ik század*, ed. Tibor Klaniczay and Béla Stoll, 15 vols. (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1959-1993), iii: *Szerelmi és lakodalmi versek* (1961), pp. 27-33.

Historiae' in the introduction to his verse.³⁵² One can find: 'Tudom, mint jár Didó
búdosó királyért, / Hogy eltűnt előle Éneas mint árniék'³⁵³ in *Rákóczi Eposz, Rákóczi
Epic Verse*).³⁵⁴

As opposed to many verse epic works in English literature, no Hungarian verse
epic has been fundamentally based on Virgil. Miklós Zrínyi's (1620-1664)³⁵⁵ *Szigeti
veszedelem, The Peril of Sziget* is the only outstanding Classics-based Hungarian
national verse epic familiar to most Hungarians. Zrínyi based it both on *The Iliad* and
on *The Aeneid*. It has all the conventional parts of a verse epic: invocation,
proposition, enumeration, *in medias res* and standard formulae of themes such as
encounters in battles or welcoming guests and the application of magical elements.

Miklós Zrínyi additionally christianised his verse epic by imitating the model
of Torquato Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata* (1575).³⁵⁶ The theme of *Szigeti
veszedelem* is that the Christian Hungarians lose their last stronghold against the
Turks. Despite their defeat, they become exalted as moral victors, and their souls are
carried off to Heaven by angels.³⁵⁷ Despite the verse's christianised theme and ending,

³⁵²RMKT, iv, *Az unitáriusok költészete*, ed. Béla Stoll, Márton Tarnócz and Imre Varga (1967), p. 484.

³⁵³'I know, how Dido sought the fugitive king, / As Aeneas had disappeared such as a shadow in front
of her', *Rákóczi Eposz*, in RMKT, ix, *A két Rákóczi György korának költészete (1630-1660)*, ed. Imre
Varga (1977), p. 464.

³⁵⁴Babits's conception of the Virgilian characteristics of Hungarian literature is the focus of this section.
I, nonetheless, aim at a complete sketch of the Hungarian *The Aeneid* adaptations and bracket the works
which Babits does not mention in his works in this section.

³⁵⁵Miklós Zrínyi came from a family whose members had been fighting against the Turks for generations
back. See *Angol életrajz Zrínyi Miklósról*, ed. Sándor Iván Kovács (Budapest: Zrínyi, 1987). This is a
reprint and a Hungarian translation of *The Conduct and Character of Count Nicholas Serini Protestant
Generalissimo of the Auxiliaries in Hungary, the Most Prudent and Resolved Champion of
Christendom with His Parallels Scanderberg & Tamberlaine* (London: Fleet-street, 1664).

³⁵⁶Torquato Tasso, *Gerusalemme Liberata* (Modena: Franco Cosimo Panini, 1991). Tasso's *Jerusalem
Delivered* was based on *The Aeneid* to a considerable extent: 'One might say that Virgil is almost as
omnipresent in the *Liberata* as he is in Dante's journey through Hell and Purgatory', Torquato Tasso,
Gerusalemme Liberata ed. Ralph Nash (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1987), p. xii.

³⁵⁷It is worth noting the greatness of the extent to which the end of Zrínyi's verse resembles the wording
and conception of Tasso's epic in canto eighteen, stanza 94: 'És minden angyal visz magával egy lelket,
/ Isten eleibe így viszik ezeket. / Egész angyali kar szép musikát kezdett, És nékem meghagyák, szómnak
tegyek véget. // Vitézek Istene! Ime az te szolgád / Nem szánta éretted világi romlását; Vére hullásával

Babits claimed that Zrínyi was more a literary descendant of Virgil than of Tasso. He defined Zrínyi's place in the history of verse in relation to Milton:

Eposza nemzeti s egyúttal vallásos eposz is, mint az *Aeneis*. Az, ami Tassóé csak lehetett volna: a kereszténység komoly hőskölteménye az ázsiai pogánysággal szemben. A kereszténységé, melyet ennek a költőnek karddal kellett védenie.³⁵⁸

One must add that the overall conception of Zrínyi's work draws much more strongly on *The Iliad* than *The Aeneid*. One must also notice that Babits often alludes to Virgil and English writers in connection with Hungarian literary history. His attitude is often biased. It shows his fundamentally anglophile and Virgilian approach to the history of Hungarian literature.

László Liszti's (1628-1663) *A Magyar Márs avagy Mohács mezején történt veszedelemnek emlékezete* (Vienna, 1653), *The Hungarian Mars, or the Commemoration of the Peril in the Field of Mohács* was inspired by Zrínyi's work.³⁵⁹ This volume contains *Clades Mohachianne*. This was based on the works of István

nagy bötüket formált, Illy subscribálással néked adta magát, Ő vitéz véreért vedd kedvedben fiát'; 'Each angel takes a soul with them, / Thus they take these in front of God. / The whole choir of angels began beautiful music, And I was instructed to finish my word. // God of valorous soldiers! Here is your servant / He did not regret to give his life up for your sake; He shaped capitals from his lost blood, And given himself to you with this subscription, For the sake of his valorous blood take his son in your favour', Miklós Zrínyi, *Szigeti Veszedelem* (Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1984), p. 332., and 'Behold the souls of those who were Christ's champions, made citizens now in Heaven, who fight with you and find themselves beside you at the glorious finish of so great a conquest. There where you see the dust and smoke commingled rolling along, and the heaped up ruins of broken works', Torquato Tasso, *Jerusalem Delivered: An English Prose Version translated and edited by Ralph Nash* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1987), p. 402.

³⁵⁸His verse epic is not only national but also religious like that of *The Aeneid*. It is what only Tasso's could have been: that is, a serious Christian verse epic against Asian pagans, for the sake of Christianity, which this poet had to defend with his sword', Babits, *Az európai irodalom története* (1979), pp. 189-90.

³⁵⁹László Liszti's *Magyar Márs* (1653). Liszti also contains allusions to *The Aeneid*. Liszti wrote his verse to commemorate the Hungarians' defeat at Mohács. Babits does not mention this work in his *Az európai irodalom története*. See *A Magyar irodalom története*, ed. Tibor Klaniczay (Budapest: Kossuth, 1985).

Brodarics, Bonfini, Ovid and Vergil. *Clades Mohachianne* is not a verse epic but a chronicle in Balassi verse form and uses only certain devices from conventional verse epic works.³⁶⁰

Mihály Csokonai Vitéz (1773-1805) could have had the strongest claim to the title of Hungarian Virgil. His teacher of verse at the Protestant college in Sárospatak,³⁶¹ József Háló Kovács, translated the whole *The Aeneid* into Hungarian.³⁶² Csokonai's verse contains many Greek and Latin phrases and mythological images which include Virgilian ones.³⁶³ He translated *The Georgics*.³⁶⁴ An exceptionally Virgilian hypertext in its approach to life is his *Szomorú halotti versek, Sad Funereal Verses*.³⁶⁵ Csokonai started to write a Virgilian verse epic, but his version of a Hungarian *The Aeneid* had remained no more than a fragment. Babits considered Csokonai, like Zrínyi, to be part of European literary history.³⁶⁶

The first complete Hungarian translation of *The Aeneid*—together with the ten eclogues—was prepared by Dávid Baróti Szabó. It was published after Csokonai's death (Part I: Vienna 1810. Part II: Pest 1813).³⁶⁷

³⁶⁰ *A Magyar irodalom története*, ed. István Sötér, 6 vols. (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1964-1966), ii: *A Magyar irodalom története 1600-tól 1772-ig*, ed. Tibor Klaniczay (1964), pp. 199-200.

³⁶¹ Sárospatak is situated in Hegyalja region in the North of Hungary. The Protestant College of Sárospatak was founded over 450 years ago and has been regarded as the Hungarian Oxford through the centuries.

³⁶² It is interesting to notice how much later this translation is than the first West European translations. 'The Aeneid, for example, was not translated into any European vernacular until the last quarter of the fifteenth century', Richard Waswo, *The Founding Legend of Western Civilization from Virgil to Vietnam* (Hanover and London: Wesleyan University Press, 1997), p. 75.

³⁶³ *Dido Aeneastól való búcsúzása, Csokonai Vitéz Mihály összes művei*, ed. István Harsányi and József Gulyás, 3 vols. (Budapest: Genius, n. d.), ii/2, p. 243.

³⁶⁴ Mihály Vitéz Csokonai translated the entire text of the *Georgics* in 1799. Only the first two books and the beginning of the third book are extant from his work. According to Ferenc Kazinzy he burnt the rest of his own translation. Ibid., pp. 267-300.

³⁶⁵ Ibid., pp. 249, 331-361. It is interesting to know that *A lélek halhatatlansága* and *Dorottya* also have roots in the oeuvre of Alexander Pope. The former was based on *The Dying Christian to his Soul* and the latter on *The Rape of the Lock*. The See Sándor Fest, *Skóciai St Margittól a walesi bárdokig* (Budapest: Universitas, 2000), pp. 286-88.

³⁶⁶ Mihály Babits, *Az európai irodalom története* (Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1979), p. 259.

³⁶⁷ *A Magyar irodalom története*, ed. István Sötér, 6 vols. (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1964-1966), iii: *A*

Mihály Vörösmarty (1800-1850), whom Babits considered to be one of the greatest lyric poet of Hungarian literature,³⁶⁸ also made an attempt at writing a Hungarian national verse epic which he titled *Zalán futása* (1825), *The Flight of Zalán*.³⁶⁹ This has a Virgilian thematic framework, namely that of one tribe's invasion by another. It is written in hexameters which reminded Babits of Virgil.³⁷⁰ Vörösmarty's verse epic is not conventional because it is a loose fabric of elegiac fragments with a resigned sentiment. Babits looked upon Vörösmarty's and his age's general aspiration to produce a national verse epic as an attempt at a Virgilian enterprise: 'Magyarországon ez a *Zalán futása*-nak éve. A költők, mintha még klasszicizáló korban élnének, vergiliusi eposzokkal akarták megajándékozni nemzetüket; a nyelv véletlenül jól bírván a hexametert'.³⁷¹

János Arany (1817-1882) must be included in this survey for several reasons. First because Babits looked upon him as his mentor. Second because of his association with Virgil. Third because he also attempted to write a national verse epic. Like *The Aeneid* in Augustus's Italy, and the English variations of *The Aeneid*, such as, Spencer's *Faerie Queene*, Arany's pieces of verse epic were meant to lay down the foundation of a Hungarian national consciousness. Arany's first long verse epic: *Az elveszett alkotmány* (1845), *The Lost Constitution* is a parody of Virgil's *The*

Magyar irodalom története 1772-től 1849-ig, ed. Pál Pándi (1965), p. 95. (Baróti attempted to translate Milton, too).

³⁶⁸ 'énekli el leghatalmasabb költeményét; a legszebb magyar verset', 'he sings one of his greatest pieces of lyrics which most beautiful Hungarian verse', Babits, *Esszék és tanulmányok* (1978), i, p. 255.

³⁶⁹ Vörösmarty Mihály összes művei, ed. Károly Horváth; Dezső Tóth (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1960-1965), iv, *Nagyobb epikai művei I* (1963), pp. 50-230.

³⁷⁰ 'Vörösmarty hexameterei semmit sem klasszikusak: az egész modern vers: Vörösmarty zenéje. Néhol talán Vergiliusra emlékeztetnek, de csak azért, mert Vergilius már néhol modern költő', Vörösmarty's hexameters are not the least classical. They remind one of Virgil. This is because Virgil is, to a great extent, a modern poet', Babits, *Esszék és tanulmányok* (1978), i, p. 213.

³⁷¹ 'In Hungary this was the year of *Zalán futása*. The poets, as if they were still living in a classicist period, wanted to present their nation with pieces of Virgilian verse epic; the language also being well suited for hexameters', Babits, *Az európai irodalom története* (1979), p. 330.

Aeneid. It also contains motifs and themes that are imitations of Tasso's, Ariosto's and Milton's verses.³⁷² Later on in his career, Arany turned to medieval Hungarian chronicles. He reconstructed his version of a national verse epic, *Csaba-trilógia* (1862), *The Trilogy of Csaba*³⁷³ from what he called fragments of a Hungarian Ur-epic. This contained legends from the ancient Hun literary inheritance.³⁷⁴ Arany also relied on the *Nibelungenlied*, Homeric and Byronic models³⁷⁵ rather than Virgilian ones.³⁷⁶ *Csaba-trilógia* did not become part of the Hungarian national consciousness. It is Arany's long verse, *Toldi* (1846-1848), also written in conventional Hungarian syllabic line (felező tizenkettes)³⁷⁷ which has taken the role of a national verse epic. Arany based *Toldi* on Hungarian late-medieval history and folk legends, and intentionally avoided the imitation of a European classical model.³⁷⁸

³⁷²László, Szörényi, 'Arany epikája', in *Literatura*, 1-4 (1983), 252-660 (p. 252).

³⁷³Arany János, *Csaba-trilógia* (Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1982).

³⁷⁴'Azt hiszem, hogy a felidézett nyomokból is kiviláglik már, hogy *volt* nálunk naiv eposz, hogy az, mint általában a népköltemény, *költői* formában nyilatkozott. Mikép esik tehát, hogy a XVI. század epikája oly keveset öröklött elődétől; [...] sőt maga az eposzköltés mestersége is csaknem teljes feloszlásba ment át?'; I believe that the extant traces reveal that we had a *naïve* verse epic and that it took the form of verse which is generally characteristic of folk poetry. Why did the epic of the sixteenth-century inherit so little from its predecessor; [...] and that even the craft of epic-making had almost entirely dissolved?' , *Arany János munkái*, ed. Frigyes Riedl, 46 vols. (Budapest: Franklin, 1907), vi: *Prózai dolgozatok* p. 301.

³⁷⁵'Just as the *Nibelungenlied* tells again in quite a new way the most ancient stories, so Homer must have taken the old stories of Greek saga and told them again in the *Iliad*, not quoting his predecessors word by word, nor adopting their verses to suit new fashions, but telling their stories fresh from the beginning, altering them to please his own taste and suiting them to the great style of which he was a master', C. M. Bowra, *Tradition and Design in the Iliad* (1930), p. 46.

³⁷⁶'Emellett a témában is rokon *Nibelungenlied* arra bátorította Aranyt, hogy a vergiliusi hagyomány eposzi kellékeinek elvetésével erősen dramatizált, tragikus jellemekre épített eposzmodellt hozzon létre. Miközben ez rokon a byroni és Byron-követő kortársi epikával, mélyebb rokonságot mutat a tragikusan is értelmezhető Iliással', 'The *Nibelungenlied* whose subject matter Arany imitated encouraged Arany to create a verse epic based on strongly dramatic characters in contrast to the conventional devices of the Virgilian epic. While his verse is related to the Byronic and the contemporary imitations of the Byronic model, it is deeply related to *The Iliad* with its tragic reading', László Szörényi, 'Arany epikája', in *Literatura*, 1-4 (1983), 252-660 (p. 261).

³⁷⁷Arany wrote a study: 'On the Hungarian National Verse-form', 'A magyar nemzeti versidomról' concerning the function and applications of this form: see *ibid.*, pp. 256-60. A short history of the application of this form in Hungarian verse is in András Kecskés, Péter Szilágyi, Lajos Szuromi, *Kis Magyar Verstan* (Budapest: Országos Pedagógiai Intézet, n. d.), pp. 29-30. Another summary of the history of this verse form is in Erika Szepes and István Szerdahelyi, *Verstan*, a reprint of the 1981 edition (Budapest: Tárogató, 2000).

³⁷⁸One of the reasons which made Babit so fond of Arany is the English roots of some Arany's works.

In his *Az európai irodalom története* Babits compared Arany with Tennyson,³⁷⁹ and in his unfinished doctoral dissertation on Arany, 'Arany mint arisztokrata', Babits claimed himself to be Antaeus' son.³⁸⁰

The lyric Virgil did not really appeal to Hungarian poets either. This is again a proof of Babits's singularity in having rediscovered Virgil, and becoming a twentieth-century founder of Virgilian ethos in Hungarian verse. One can find variations of Virgilian imagery and themes both in the early and in the late Babits verse. After Babits, Miklós Radnóti (1909-1944) continued the naturalisation of Virgil in Hungarian verse.

The summary above shows how small a part Virgil played in Hungarian literary history. It also testifies Babits's exceptional role in it. The root of Babits's attachment to Virgil lies both in the original Virgil, and in its English adaptations.

Sándor Fest writes: 'recent literary research has discovered elements originating in English poetry in two popular Hungarian tales recorded in the sixteenth century—those of Laurentius Tar and Nicholas Toldi', Fest, *Skóciai St Margittól a waleszi bárdokig* (2000), p. 604. Nicholas Toldi served the Holy See and Queen Giovanna from 14 January 1365. He was connected with the English White Company. He can be seen as a descendant of Chaucer's Gamelyn. The stories of the two heroes have many similar features. These are their extraordinary strength, their oppressed position amongst their brothers; their achievements and their royal reward. See *ibid.*, pp. 671-73.

³⁷⁹ 'A hun ősekhöz mintát vesz az arisztokratikus magyar parasztról, s különös illúziót kelt ezzel a módszerrel. Tennyson a harcok helyett lírát és szerelmeket ír. Arany ellenben családi életet ír, női intrikákat, mint a *Niebelung*-dal, rokoni viszályt és pártokat. Ezért a regényszerű modernségért akkor támadták is. De micsoda bölcsesség és élet van épp ebben, s milyen különösen művésziileg hat a zengő alexandrinokba öltöztetve, melyek Magyar népi formából képződtek, s nem kevésbé modernné váltak itt és rafinálttá, mint akár Tennyson verse', 'He uses aristocratic Hungarian peasants as a model for Hun ancestors and thus creates a special illusion. Tennyson writes lyrics and love instead of war. Arany writes about controversies and animosities between relatives; family life and female intrigues like one can find them in the *Niebelungenlied*. He was dispraised for this novelistic modernism. But what wisdom and vitality hide precisely in this feature and what an artistic effect it has in the sound of alexandrines whose origin is in Hungarian folk verse and which did not come second after Tennyson in their modernity and sophistication', Babits, *Az európai irodalom története* (1979), p. 415.

³⁸⁰ György Rába, *Babits Mihály költészete* (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1981), p. 12.

3.5 The classical and English origins of Babits's Virgilianism

Both Babits's Latin and English interests had their origins in his early childhood, as I demonstrated in the introduction. Babits's interest in Latin and Virgilian aspects of civilisation can be traced back to his father, grandfather and great-grandfather. His interest in English literature can be said to have derived from his mother's library of English novels, and the English section of his family's library.³⁸¹ At secondary school Babits studied Latin and continued his reading of English literature which included works by Thackeray.³⁸² Thackeray's Virgilian orientation focused mainly on the individual's history within the nation's. *The History of Henry Esmond* is the first part of Thackeray's *The Aeneid*. Thackeray writes:

The London road stretched away from the rising sun, and to the west were swelling hills and peaks, behind which many a time Harry Esmond saw the same sun setting, that he now looks on thousands of miles away across the great ocean—in a new Castlewood by another stream, that bears, like the new country of wandering Aeneas, the fond names of the land of his youth.³⁸³

At the University of Budapest (1901-1905) Babits read Latin and Hungarian.

'Hungarian' here meant Hungarian and European literature.³⁸⁴ He did a course on Virgil, and wrote his Latin dissertation on Virgil's *Georgics*.³⁸⁵ Evidence of his dedication to English verse from this period is his translations from Keats, Wordsworth and Tennyson.³⁸⁶ These poets all had a Latin education and the lyricism of Keats and Wordsworth has relevant roots in Virgil, as I will demonstrate later on.

³⁸¹ See footnote 8.

³⁸² See footnote 11 and footnote 12.

³⁸³ William Thackeray, *The History of Henry Esmond* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), p. 70.

³⁸⁴ György Belia in his *Babits Mihály tanulóiévei* (1983), pp. 146-51 published the description of all the courses Babits did at university.

³⁸⁵ György Rába, *Babits Mihály költészete* (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1981), p. 22.

³⁸⁶ The first batch of verses Babits translated date from his student years. This includes Suckling, 'Why so pale'; Wordsworth, 'Ruth'; Poe, 'To S. F. Osgood', 'The Conqueror Worm' and 'A Dream within a Dream'; Browning, *The Pied Piper of Hamelin* and 'De Gustibus'; Swinburne, 'The Tragedy of the Bride' and 'In the Water'; Tennyson, 'St. Agnes' Eve' and 'The Golden Year'; and Byron, 'All is Vanity', György Rába, *Szép hűtlenek* (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1969), p. 22.

Babits was deeply impressed by Petronius', Browning's, Tennyson's and Swinburne's verse which he read while he taught Latin and Hungarian in Baja and Szeged from 1905 to 1908.³⁸⁷ No data are available on when Babits read other English representatives of the Virgilian tradition such as Milton, Spencer, Pope, and Dryden. His *Az európai irodalom története* and his essays show that he did read them. They must also have focused his attention on Virgil. These last four poets were interested in Virgil as the poet of a real empire. (Hungarian literary interest in Pope had been relatively strong even before Babits).³⁸⁸

In his *Az európai irodalom története* Babits called Tennyson the English Virgil, just as T. S. Eliot did in his essay 'In Memoriam'. Babits's hypertextual transposition of Tennyson can be seen in his early verse. I do not think it is possible to tell to what extent Tennyson's Virgilian roots strengthened Babits's Virgilian spirit, or Babits's preference for Tennyson.³⁸⁹ These two seem inevitably intertwined. In his *Az európai irodalom története* Babits devoted long sections to Tennyson. He wrote:

³⁸⁷ See footnotes 43 and 44.

³⁸⁸ Fest, *Skóciai Szent Margittól a waleszi bárdokig* (2000), pp. 274-93, 348-55.

³⁸⁹ An example of Babits's reformulation of Tennyson's 'Claribel', 'Nothing will die and All things must live' is in Babits's 'In Horatium': 'When will the stream be weary of flowing/ Under my eye?/ When will the wind be weary of blowing/ Over the sky?/ When will the clouds be aweary of fleeting?/ When will the heart be aweary of beating?/ And nature die?/ Never, oh! Never, nothing will die./ The stream flows, The wind blows,/ The cloud fleets,/ The heart beats,/ Nothing will die', *Tennyson: Complete Poems and Plays*, ed. T. Herbert Warren and Frederick Page (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 2-3; Babits's intertext: 'Nézz fel az égre: barna cigány ködök-/ nézz szét a vizen: fürge fehér habok/ örök cseréjükért hálásak, / halld Aiolost hogyan áldják, dallal. / A láng is hullám szüntelenül lobog / főnix-világunk. Így nem is él soha,/ mi soha meg nem halt', *Babits Mihály összegyűjtött versei* (1997), p. 7. (One must note that Ovid is one common classical source of Tennyson and Babits: 'omnia mutantur; nihil interit: erat et illinc huc venit, hinc illuc, et quoslibet occupat artus spiritus eque feris humana in corpora transit inque feras noster, nec tempore dperit ullo'; 'All things are changing; nothing dies. The spirit wanders, comes now here, now there, and occupies whatever frame it pleases', *Ovid in six volumes*, iii-iv, *Metamorphosis*, trans. Frank Justus Miller, ed. G. P. Goold (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard and Willam Heineman, MCMLXXXIV). Another is the 'Leonine Elegiacs' and Babits's 'Új Leoninusok'. A short example from here: 'LOW-FLOWING breezes are roaming the/ broad valley dimm'd in the gloaming;/ Thoro' the black-stemm'd pines only the/ far river shines', *Tennyson: Complete Poems and Plays* (1983), p. 3; Babits's architext: 'Kékek az alkonyi dombok, elülnek a szürke galambok, / hallgat az esteli táj, ballag a kései nyáj./ Villám; távoli dörgés; a faluban kocsizörgés,/ gyűl a vihar serege: még lila s már fekete', *Babits Mihály összegyűjtött versei* (1997), p. 99.

Feltámasztani az eposzt: nem volt ez túlságosan is korszerűtlen feladat? De ugyanekkor gondolt Tennyson is ilyesmire. Tán mint *laureatus*: nemzete ősmondáit verni a modern művészet nagy harmóniájába, amelyet meghódított. S az időpont, bizonyos látószögből nézve, inkább még kedvezett. Igaz a mondák nem éltek már a 'nép száján'. De a modern filológia és történetírás csodálatos gazdagságban ásta ki őket a múlt félhomályából. Egy tudós és rafinált költő megbecsülhetetlen anyaggal építhetett. S ami a korszerűtlenséget illeti: Vergilius sem naiv és hívő korban írta eposzát. Hanem egy haladó és fejlődés csúcsára jutott korban. Nem hasonlít-e például a Tennyson helyzete egy kicsit Vergiliuséhoz? A modern nemzetek végleg kialakultak, kialakult a nemzeti érzés is, az új vallás, a nacionalizmus, mely egyelőre a tudománnyal osztozott a lelkek feletti hatalomban.³⁹⁰

Babits did not consider Virgil to be the poet of his contemporary empire exclusively. He did not think Tennyson wanted to flatter his contemporary environment either. Babits saw both Virgil and Tennyson as poets who talk to their nations on the basis of their nations' lore and show an ideal for them. In the sense of maintaining a moral ideal Babits was just like them. In the sense of going back to Virgil and remaking his statements, he has his roots in the legacy of all Virgil based English artists above.

3.6 The themes and compositional features of *Timár Virgil fia*

Before discussing the attitude and tone of this novel, I will summarize its story with special attention to its Virgilian leitmotif. My reason for this is that *Timár Virgil fia* is not translated into English and its story is inaccessible to the English-speaking readership.

³⁹⁰ 'Was it not an anachronistic task to try and resurrect the verse epic? Nevertheless, Tennyson also thought about something of this sort at this time. Perhaps as a *poet laureate*, he tried to hammer the old legends of his nation into the vast harmony of modern art which he had conquered. Looking at it from a certain angle even his time favoured him. Though it must be admitted that the legends did not live on people's lips any longer. Modern literary study and historical writing dug them out of the twilight of the past with all their wonderful richness. And being a scholar as well as a cunning poet, Tennyson was able to build with some invaluable material. As far as being up to date goes, was not Tennyson's situation similar to Virgil's? The modern nations had been formed, and along with them was born a new national spirit or the new religion of nationalism, which for some time shared its supremacy over the human soul with the sciences', Babits, *Az európai irodalom története* (1979), p. 392.

Virgil Timár is a priest teacher³⁹¹ of the classics in a Cistercian school. He is not only a Christian Father and the spiritual father figure of the novel, but also takes on the role of being his student's, Pista's father. He is an outsider in the school, as he is above the general intellectual level of his colleagues. Their main preoccupation can be summarised as gossiping about each other, their students and ecclesiastical politics. Timár's natural ancestry does not define him. He was not nurtured by his mother, and his only memory of his father is that he was a gardener. When he was a little boy called János, he used to look at pictures of saints while his father was doing his job. Apart from the female saints his other images of women from childhood were the Renaissance madonnas of Raphael and Botticelli.³⁹² He was given pictures of these by his teacher of religion. Timár's attachment to these figures show the spiritual basis of his existence.

His humanity only surfaces when he takes responsibility for his student because of the fatal illness, and subsequent death of his mother. The love he comes to experience does not allow itself to be characterised in Freudian terms. It remains entirely spiritual. He compares Pista's dying mother to St. Catherine of Sienna, and sees Pista as a son of his spirituality and intellect. The strength of their mutual attachment fluctuates. This is because Pista goes through different stages of rebellion

³⁹¹Babits called *Timár Virgil fia* an autobiographical novel in the interview he gave in 1923 to *Magyarország*, which is published in *Itt a halk és komoly beszéd ideje* (1997). In this he identifies his school memories with Pista's character. He also made it clear that Pista is not his literary adopted son, Aladár Komjáthy, and Vitányi is not Ignotus, but they are types. Babits uses the word type according to the convention of the commedia de'll arte which can be equated with the English use of persona. He gave this interview to *Múlt és Jövő* in 1926; published in *Itt a halk és komoly beszéd ideje* (1997).

³⁹²I mentioned already in *A gólyakalifa* that critics sometimes wrongly associate Babits with Proust. See footnotes 143 and 144. One can, however, find exactly the same motif here as in Proust: 'Swan was struck by her resemblance to the figure of Zeporah, Jethro's Daughter, which is to be seen in one of the Sistine frescoes. He had always found a peculiar fascination in tracing in the paintings of the Old Masters', Marcel Proust, *Swann's Way* (2000), p. 261. *Swann's Way* was published in the same year as *Timár Virgil fia* (1922), therefore this can only be an interesting parallel.

in order to assert himself. Meanwhile Virgil Timár experiences emotions of attachment and jealousy. The love he feels towards his student-son never goes beyond the bounds of spiritual love, and finally leads to separation. The emotion which becomes most acutely felt by Virgil Timár is the pain over the loss of his son when Pista finally leaves him and goes out into the world. It is only at this stage that he stops looking upon Pista as his son.

A most telling feature of Virgil Timár is his name which not only sets the theme of the novel, but also underlies his identification with Virgil. He is coming up to forty which the narrator calls 'the middle of life'. The latter quip is an allusion to Dante. Forty is also the age at which Virgil (70 B. C.-19 B. C.) became famous for his publication of the *Georgics*. He wrote these between 37-29, and then began to think seriously about the composition of *The Aeneid* (29-19). The narrator calls Virgil: 'az isteni *vates*, akiről Virgilünk azt szokta tréfásan mondani, hogy az ő védőszentje. [...] aki a klasszikus művészet minden pompájával már majdnem keresztény tud lenni, s a Történet nagy suhanása mögött mögött meglátja a természet csöndes szépségeit, megérzi a tárgyak néma könnyeit, leírja a gyermekek vidám ugrálását'.³⁹³ The reading of Virgil for Virgil Timár is a special occasion and is the highlight of his week on Sunday. The parts comprising his reading, are the main leitmotif of the novel. They are also examples of explicit Virgilian intertextuality because Babits quotes them in Latin.

The first three quotations are read by Timár on the morning following Lina's death:

³⁹³ 'the divine *vates*, whom Timár jokingly calls his own patron saint. [...] who could be almost Christian despite the pomposity of classical art, and could see the quiet beauty of nature, feel the silent tears of objects and depict the happy frisking of children behind the grand reeling of History', Mihály Babits, *Timár Virgil fia* (1982), p. 407.

A negyedik könyvet lapozta föl most, az utolsó sorokat, ahol szinte kívülről tudta már; Ahol az elhagyott Dido halálát írja le. Iris, mint egy bibliai angyal, leszáll az Olymposról³⁹⁴.

*mille trahens varios adverso sole colores
Devolat—*³⁹⁵

és megszabadítja a szerelemnek e szegény áldozatát a test bilincseiből. Iris a szivárvány—gondolta—, az istenek tarka ruhájú heroldja, aki az enyhülést hirdeti a zivatar után, ugyanaz a hírnök, akit a bibliai Isten is elküldött a vízözön után Noéhoz³⁹⁶

*at puer Ascanius mediis in vallibus acri
gaudet equo jamque hos cursu, jam praeterit illos...*³⁹⁷

Milyen kedves kép, milyen életteli: a kisfiú, aki örül a paripának, és hol elül, hol hátul fickándozik a vadászcsapatban. Timár megkereste a többi helyet is, ahol Aeneas kis fiáról van szó: amikor menekülnek a tűzvészben, s görcsösen kapaszkodik a gyermek a hős kezeibe.³⁹⁸

*sequiturque patrem non passibus aequis.*³⁹⁹

A nap beszüremkedett a nagy fa gallyain, meg-megcsillant az imázsámoly friss virága fölött.⁴⁰⁰

The next quotation occurs about two thirds of the way through the novel. This marks a pivotal point which follows the long emotional and intellectual struggle between Timár and Pista, and precedes the appearance of Pista's real father. At this stage a temporary emotional equilibrium is achieved which allows Timár and Pista to

³⁹⁴ 'He opened up the fourth book at the last lines which by now he almost knew by heart, and where Virgil depicts the death of the deserted Dido. Iris, like an angel from the Bible, descends from Olympus', Babits, *Timár Virgil fia* (1982), p. 408.

³⁹⁵ 'trailing a thousand colours as she caught the light of the sun, flew down across the sky', Virgil, *The Aeneid*, trans. W. F. Jackson Knight (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1956), book IV, lines 700-01.

³⁹⁶ 'and liberates this poor victim of love from the body's fetters. She is the herald of the gods in many-coloured clothes proclaiming the thaw after the shower; the same herald as the one whom the God of the Bible sent to Noah after the flood', Babits, *Timár Virgil fia* (1982), p. 408.

³⁹⁷ 'Deep in the valley below, the young Ascanius was keenly enjoying his ride on a spirited horse, outstripping now these and now those at full gallop;', Virgil, *The Aeneid* (1956), book IV, lines 156-57.

³⁹⁸ 'What a nice picture, full of life: the little boy who is overjoyed by his steed, cavorting sometimes at the front; other times at the back of the hunt. Timár looked up the other places concerning Aeneas' little son: when they are fleeing in the fire and the child clings to the arms of the hero:', Babits, *Timár Virgil fia* (1982), p. 408.

³⁹⁹ 'kept beside his father with his short steps', Virgil, *The Aeneid* (1956), book II, lines 722-23.

⁴⁰⁰ 'The sun seeped in through the branches of the tree, and glowed above the fresh flowers of the kneeler', *Timár Virgil fia* (1982), p. 408.

be almost equals in their distilled emotional and intellectual attachment towards each other. (Real harmony in their relationship is never achieved since Pista can never see Virgil Timár even as his *ghostly father*). The symbolic compression of this process culminates in the celebration of Timár's twentieth anniversary of being a teacher. A Grecian style stone bench is carved by one of his former students to commemorate this occasion. The bench is placed at his favourite resting place on Sun-hill, and bears an inscription (intertext) from Timár's favourite work, *The Aeneid*. The description of peaceful harmony on Sun-hill and its surroundings which Virgil Timár experiences draws on the main theme and landscape description of *The Eclogues*:

A Szent Makár templomnál⁴⁰¹ csöndesen leemelték kalapjukat, s nyugodt léptekkel indultak föl a Makár-hegynek. Ott aztán öszönte egy barackot, körtét, egy-egy gerezd szőlőt talált a fiúnak. [...] Két kis rókája volt kinn a szőlőben, rókafiak, akiket a vincellér fogott egyszer, és Timár fölnevelte vele. Elnézte a kis állatok játékát, amint hancúroztak egy nagy kosárban, [...] a tölgyes hegyek közt; volt egy kedves padja Timárnak, az úgynevezett Demir-kapunál, a Nap-hegy tetején, azon üldögéltek sokszor alkonyatig. Naiv fantáziájuk fölhevült, hangjuk emelkedett; a rigók fölriadtak, és a meszes hegyek visszhangzották a szót.⁴⁰²

The landscape in Virgil is less cultivated which is due to the fact that a war is going on. The peaceful and idyllic characteristics of nature are in contrast to the unpleasantness and cruelty of war. Like the description above *The Eclogues* also have two, that is young and old, male protagonists:

Ah, fortunate old man, here among hallowed springs

⁴⁰¹ St. Macarius the younger who was a citizen of Alexandria was the son St. Macarius of Egypt. Macarius means happy. Both these saints were renowned for their renunciation of worldly wealth and for their humility. They lived in seclusion in the desert and divided their time between manual labour and prayer. See Alban Butler, *The Lives of the Fathers, Martyrs and other Principal Saints*, 6 vols. (London, Dublin and Belfast: Virtue & Co., n.d.), i, ed. F. C. Husenbeth, pp. 9-12, 65-67.

⁴⁰² 'They quietly took their hats off at St. Macarius church and set out to climb Makár-hill with calm steps. Every autumn he found a pear, a peach or an odd bunch of grapes for the boy. [...] He had two young foxes in the vineyard. Once upon a time they were caught by the vine-dresser and Timár has brought them up. He watched the play of the small foxes as they were frisking in the big basket [...] Amongst the oak woods at the gate Demir on the top of Sun-hill Timár had a bench which he was very fond of. They often used to sit here until sun-set. They fired each other's naïve imagination; raised their voice; the wrens awoke and the lime hills echoed their words', *Timár Virgil fia* (1982), pp. 389, 419.

And familiar streams you'll enjoy the longed-for shade, the cool shade.

Here, as of old, where your neighbour's land marches with yours,
The sally hedge, with bees of Hybla sipping its blossom,
Shall often hum you gently to sleep. On the other side
Vine-dressers will sing to the breezes at the crag's foot;
And all the time your favourites, the husky-voiced wood
Pigeons
Shall coo away, and turtle doves make moan in the elm tops.⁴⁰³

Pista chooses the following lines for Virgil Timár's bench:

VIRGIL'S REST

...silvis scaena coruscis

desuper, horrentique atrum nemus imminet umbra; intus atque duces, vivoque sedilia
saxo...⁴⁰⁴

St. Augustine seems to be a common denominator of Timár's and Pista's newly appearing 'real father'. After having received Lina's letter, in which she notifies him of the existence of his son, he goes to the school to claim his son on the basis of the name used on his son's birth certificate, and on that of consanguinity. He sees a picture of the Jesuit saint Ignatius Loyola in the corridor of the school, and a book by Augustine⁴⁰⁵ on the priest's desk. These make Vitányi refer to the *Confessions* in his speech. He compares himself to Mephistopheles, and wants to take his son and show him the real world. He talks about love in Greek, and uses the term

⁴⁰³Virgil, *The Eclogues The Georgics*, trans. C. Day Lewis (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 5.

⁴⁰⁴...a curtain of trees with quivering leaves reaches downwards, and behind them is an overhanging forest-clad mountain-side mysterious and dark...and fresh water, and there are seats there, in the living rock', Virgil, *The Aeneid* (1956), book I, lines 165-66.

⁴⁰⁵The use of St Augustine's figure has been less popular with English poets and authors than Virgil's. He is, nevertheless, a symbolic person and writer because: 'Augustine took up a position half-way between the contending parties. He never considered the possibility of a sudden break with Graeco-Roman culture, but he dismissed the arguments of Jerome and attenuated those of Basil, making it clear that while a limited amount of borrowing from paganism was vitally necessary, the amount could be limited. Bringing to bear on the problem that cut and dried simplifying spirit which was his notable contribution to the development of his age, he worked out a solution which ordinary men could easily accept', R. R., *The Classical Heritage and its Beneficiaries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), p. 54. This aspect of Augustine is relevant not only from the point of view of Virgil Timár and this novel but also from the entire Babits oeuvre.

eros uranios.⁴⁰⁶ Oblivious to Timár's pain, Pista chooses to leave with his real father.

It must be emphasised that what he really chooses is not in any sense a father, but the experience of the real world. His student's departure makes Timár realise the torture one feels when one loses someone whom one has really loved. As an individual he is left entirely on his own, and on the night before his son's putting out into the world, he hears the murmur of the sea during the storm:

*Nox erat, et placidum carpebant fessa soporem
Copora...*⁴⁰⁷

Timárnak Vergilius sorai jártak az eszében. Éjszaka: minden elnyugszik,⁴⁰⁸

...pecudes, pictaeque volucres...⁴⁰⁹

csak a szerencsétlen Dido nem alhatik a párnán. Künn zúg, zúg a tenger, nagy árbocok feszülnek az égnek, útjára készül a hitetlen trójai...

Ó, jaj, nem! ... az önykéntelen asszociáció szédítette és megborzasztotta. Milyen borzasztó szennyos a földiek szerelme! ... De nem is igazi szeretet az:⁴¹⁰

*nondum amabam, et amabam amare... amorem
amabam... et quaerebam, quid amarem...*⁴¹¹

idézte magának Augustinust: még nem szerettem, nem tudtam, hogy mit kell szeretni; és szerettem volna szeretni: a Szerelmet szerettem: kerestem, mit szeressek... Most következik az igazi, az egyetlen szerelem: az Isten szerelme...⁴¹²

From a Christian theological point of view Timár's Augustinian reconciliation

⁴⁰⁶ See the distinction between Popular and Heavenly love in Plato's *Symposium*, Plato, *Lysis, Symposium, Gorgias* (Cambridge M. A. and London: H. U. P. and Heinemann, 1967), pp. 107-09.

⁴⁰⁷ 'It was night, and tired creatures all over the world were enjoying kindly sleep', Virgil, *The Aeneid* (1956), book IV, lines 525-26.

⁴⁰⁸ 'Timár had Vergilius's lines on his mind. At night: all find rest', Babits, *Timár Virgil Fia* (1982), p. 456.

⁴⁰⁹ '... all the farm animals, and the colourful birds', Virgil, *The Aeneid* (1956), book IV, line 527.

⁴¹⁰ 'only Dido the unfortunate could not sleep on her pillow. Outside, the sea keeps murmuring, vast masts stretch against the sky; the unfaithful Trojan is preparing to set out... Oh no!... the involuntary association made Timár dizzy and shiver. How egregiously dirty is the love of mortals!.. But that is not real love:', Babits, *Timár Virgil Fia* (1982), p. 456.

⁴¹¹ See also 'Give thyself to me, O my God, restore thyself to me! See, I love thee; and if it be too little, let me love thee even more strongly', *Augustine: Confessions and Enchiridion*, ed. Albert C. Outler (London: SCM, 1955), p. 303.

⁴¹² 'he quoted Augustine to himself: I have not loved yet because I did not know what to love. I would have loved to love: I loved love: sought what to love... Now the only true and real love will follow: the love of God', Mihály Babits, *Timár Virgil Fia* (1982), p. 456.

to his self represents a higher stage of harmony than the one he used to experience through Virgil during his visits to Sun-hill. The novel ends with Timár waving off his student with complete reserve while Pista embarks excitedly in the company of his natural father.

3.7 Virgilian and English sources of melancholy in Babits's novel

Apart from the novel's overall mood of resignation, it has a melancholic tone which Béla G. Németh praises. This characterises its narration and expresses Babits's attitude to the world. One cause of the detached resignation is the low moral and emotional standard which is represented in the world of the novel. Virgil Timár is the only representative of an uncompromisingly good moral and emotional attitude. He is, nevertheless, out of place in the world. Virgil Timár's biography would be really sad without him finally transferring all the losses and pains of his life into a transcendental realm. He does this through the Augustinian spirituality he adopts. The spiritual theme and the melancholic tone of the narrative have their roots in Virgil, Shakespeare and in English Romantic verse which also has roots in Virgil.

3.7.1 Sources of melancholy in *The Aeneid* and in *Timár Virgil fia*

One characteristic feature of *The Aeneid* is the ineffable melancholy over the ineffectuality of the individual's emotions including love. The other is the detachment a hero's super-human mission demands so that he could fulfil his task. Aeneas is made to relate to the world through his filial duty. He is the son of his father, the father of his son, the inheritor of a lost kingdom, and a predestined means of the Gods. He has to follow his stars (the threads the Parcae weave) without any

emotional attachment to the world.⁴¹³ He reacts to the murder of Evander's son and kills Turnus in return for Pallas's death but even his act of murder is subordinated to his role and mission. Dido is an emblem of a woman and a queen who becomes the victim of her emotions. Her act of killing herself is redeemed with a melancholic tone in the world of the verse epic. She and her love are sacrifices in Aeneas' journey.⁴¹⁴

When discussing the problem of separating the Virgilian and English origins of Babits's attachment to Virgil, I maintained that Babits's Virgilian orientation cannot be separated from his devotion to English literature. In the Virgil-based pieces of Babits's verse, Babits represents individuals who have already passed the stage of wanting to fulfil their emotions. In the world of *The Aeneid*, Dido and Turnus are the main representatives of this struggle but their stories are subordinated to the general super-emotional conception of the verse epic.⁴¹⁵ Babits depicts two variations of this subject matter in his novel. One is Virgil Timár who has passed the stage of trying to fulfil any emotions (the tender minded). The other is the remaining characters who have never had any serious emotional experience (the tough minded). In *Timár Virgil fia* only Virgil Timár has an emotional life and his emotions are almost entirely spiritualised. During the course of *Timár Virgil fia*, he struggles to suppress even the remnants of any emotions that could connect him with human existence. The storyline of his spiritual journey culminates in his entirely solitary existence. It is much

⁴¹³'Aeneas' interior development throughout *The Aeneid* unfolds the nature and mystery of an historically experienced vocation', J. William Hunt, *Forms of Glory* (1973), p. 79.

⁴¹⁴'Both of these, the repression of his feelings and the commitment to his faith, undergo their greatest test in leaving Carthage the following year', *ibid.*, p. 73.

⁴¹⁵'Both in leaving Carthage and in reaching Italy, Aeneas envisions only good; but Dido falls victim to his pursuit of vision, Turnus to its realization. Only this haunting awareness of the guilt and pain implicit in both transactions fully poses the question of *The Aeneid*, the epic question with which the direct voice of the poet opens and closes the poem: [...] (1. 8-11) [...] (12. 500-504). While the parallel imagery of Dido and Turnus, therefore, suggests that much of Virgil's meaning lies in the balanced and alternating patterns, his fuller meaning lies in the framing by both patterns of the distinctive and central section', J. William Hunt, *Forms of Glory* (1973), p. 84.

more melancholic than the outcome of Aeneas'. The tone of the novel also surpasses Virgil's melancholy. *The Aeneid* finishes with the prospect of peace after war, and of the foundation of a morally sound future empire. This compensates for the sacrifice of the individual's emotional reality. Babits's Virgilian hypertext in this sense, finishes with no change for the better, and almost no prospects for a better world either. The dominant aspect of reality at the end of *Timár Virgil fia* is that of the transcendental world. The love of God comes to represent the only morally positive way of existence. Only parts of Wordsworth's and Keats's verse contain similar conceptions and tone to those in *Timár Virgil fia*.

3.7.2 Other classical and English sources of melancholy in Babits's novel

The originally Greek Laodamia is a minor character in *The Aeneid*. She is another heroine who, like Dido, commits suicide because she is incapable of coming to terms with the loss of her husband. Aeneas in *The Aeneid* meets Laodamia in the underworld. In the *Divina Commedia* Virgil and Dante meet her in Hell amongst the unhappy lovers. Wordsworth also rewrote her story. One must mention that he was rereading Virgil with his son when he wrote his *Laodamia*.⁴¹⁶

Wordsworth's verse starts with Laodamia imploring celestial pity because of the acute sense of loss she feels over the death of her husband. Jove hears her prayer, and her husband's shadow thus returns from the other world to teach her about the calm pleasure of the Elysian land. He tells her that by controlling her passion, and

⁴¹⁶Douglas Bush, *Myth and Christian Tradition in English Poetry* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1968), p. 40. *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. E. de Selincourt, 5 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1940-49), ii, p. 267-72, 518-19. Babits translated 'Ruth' from Wordsworth's *Poems of the Imagination*. 'Ruth' can also be read as an allegory of the destructive power of pain over passionate love.

reconciling herself to the loss of sensual pleasure, she will have peace. Her weakness lies in not being able to accept this, and after her husband's shadow leaves, she will die untimely. Laodamia's pleading and suffering is the only expression and representation of human emotion in Wordsworth's verse. The description of her death is given a dramatic effect. The dominant Virgilian melancholy of this verse originates in the expression of the incompatibility of man's spirituality and women's earth-bound nature. It expresses the melancholy the husband feels first because his wife is incapable of pure spiritual love, and second because he has to lose her thus irretrievably in the eternal realm of the spirit. The tree rising from the couple's grave is an emblem of their souls, and of the moral judgement on the couple. The growth of the tree is emblematic of the soundness of the husband's spirit, and its blight is the failure of the wife's. The tree's struggle is reminiscent of the gnarled trees in Dante's *Hell*. These represent the living souls of those who, having committed suicide on the Earth, have to suffer eternal damnation.⁴¹⁷ The tree also emphasises that the main realm of the verse is transcendental. The spirituality of this realm is Virgilian and Dantean.

Babits also reworked this theme. His verse is an emotionally charged hypertextual version of Laodamia's story. His transposition of Swinburne's *Atalanta in Calydon* (1865) dominates this verse.⁴¹⁸ Like Swinburne in his *Atalanta*, Babits applied the same story, images, and direct expression of emotions. These are all original characteristics of the Greek tragedy. Babits's application of the Greek motifs and themes are stricter than Swinburne's. ~~Such as~~ Swinburne's queen in *Atalanta in*

Like

⁴¹⁷Dante Alighieri, *The Vision; or Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise*, trans. Henry Francis Cary (London: Covent Garden, MDCCCLVI, pp. 65-67).

⁴¹⁸See Antal Szerb, 'Az intellektuális költő', in *Babits Mihály száz esztendeje* (Budapest: Gondolat, 1983), pp. 152-160. This article was originally published in *Széphalom*, 4-6 (1927).

Calydon, Babits's Laodamia allows passion to rule her common-sense and reason.

She will not succumb to any rational pleading either for her own sake or for the sake of her husband, son, and community. She challenges fate to the end by the right of the individual and refuses to know about any form of emotional self-control. The regularly recurring replies of the seer and the chorus are characteristic of her emotional turbulence. Her son summarises his experience of her, and her death as:

Gyenge vén szivem
Nem bírhat ennyi átkot, ennyi borzadályt.⁴¹⁹

to which the semi-chorus replies:

O megharcolta a harcot
S elhullt a végzet alatt.⁴²⁰

Laodamia does not accept the reality of communal interest, and will persist in a self-destructive rebellion on behalf of justice for her own self. Both the Greek and Babits's judgement on her conduct is an elevation of the individual's heroic but self-destructive tragedy, according to Tyche. Anake was a symbol of fate or destiny in the Greek, and especially in Homer's world. According to her, the cosmos was harmonious with the individual; the human world and the realm of the gods. As opposed to the symbol of Anake, and that of a world suiting the conception of Virgilian fate; Tyche's world presupposed the individual to be independent of the world which surrounded him. It bore no relation to either Virgil's universe, or the world of Dantean, Wordsworthian and Christian feeling and morality. Following the conception of Wordsworth's and Swinburne's verse, the conduct of Babits's heroine is entirely Tyche-ean Greek, and pre-Virgilian in its mood and attitude. The attitude

⁴¹⁹'my meek and ancient heart / cannot bear so much damnation and terror', *Babits Mihály összegyűjtött versei* (1997), p. 134.

⁴²⁰'She has fought her battle / and has died under her destiny', *ibid.*, p. 134.

and tone of Babits's verse draws mostly on Wordsworth's. It is originally Virgilian and full of melancholy because of the negative attitude of the heroine.

When young, Keats translated *The Aeneid* into English, and had a fair understanding of *sunt lacrimae rerum, et mentem mortalia tangunt*. In the *Ode on a Grecian Urn* he expressed a most acute version of Virgil's melancholy towards seeking pleasure in the fulfilment of love towards another human being, and life in general. His verse approaches the futility of love and life from the point of view of immortality; the only valid realm for its speaker.

Babits wrote two early Virgilian verses which, although not as objective in their approach as the 'Ode on a Grecian Urn', are not far from the infinite otherworldliness and melancholy of Keats. One is 'Klasszikus Álmok' (1910), 'Classical Dreams' in which the classical figures are embodiments of the speaker's dreamful thoughts:

Klasszikus álmok az én lelkem bús álmai: fáradt
gondolatom szeret öltetni hosszuredőzetű tógát⁴²¹

The figures that are allegorising thoughts present a sacrifice to an indifferent goddess who is presented as:

Igy ül ezüst trónján és temploma drága hüsében
nézi az áthaladó nagy időket, nézi az ember
koldus-áldozatát s oltára busillatu füstjét
s meg sem rezzen a Győzelem ércmezű szobra kezében.⁴²²

In the other verse which bears the title of 'Sunt Lacrimae Rerum' (1908) the weeping objects personify human suffering and pain. They are, nevertheless, compared to the only human image of the verse: a suffering Christian woman. In this

⁴²¹ 'Classical dreams are the sad dreams of my soul, my tired / thoughts like to array themselves in peplopes with long drapes', *ibid.*, p. 93.

⁴²² 'Thus she sits on her silver throne and in the coolness of her costly temple / watches the great ages of time pass by; watches man's / paltry sacrifice and the sad scented smoke of her altar / with not a tremble of the bronze clad statue of victory which she holds in her hand, *ibid.*, p. 93.

verse the speaker claims to feel the excruciating pain of the self-enclosed objects. He uses the objects as his own soul's 'objective correlative'. He states that although the objects do not think that there is anyone alive who could see them in the darkness, he, the speaker, watches them and is glad that there is someone to weep with him.

Despite the Virgilian title of the verse, the lack of detachment in the speech makes the tone of this verse different from that of Virgil. Babits's 'Klasszikus Álmok' is closer to Keats's attitude and tone. Based on Virgil's and Keats's verses, it is, again, an hypertextual expression of ineffable melancholy felt towards the ineffectuality of human emotions.

Babits's hypertextual novel contains only tamed forms of emotion. In this respect it follows Keats's verse. The narrator's acute melancholy towards its characters' conduct is expressed in the moral and emotional dignity represented by the sole figure of the priest. It also resembles the speaker's melancholy and resignation in Keats's verse. Looking at the novel's characters from the point of view of emotions, Pista's mother characterises herself on her deathbed as someone who has never been serious about them. Her detachment towards herself is almost cynical. The level of Pista's natural father's emotional and moral existence is summarized in the way he identifies himself with St. Augustine's autobiography. As I have already stated, he has no genuine emotional reality. He seems to act on whims, and is quite indifferent to anyone or anything surrounding him (tough minded). He is cynical too. One must add here that cynicism is another category William James uses in *A Pluralistic Universe*. Babits's oeuvre undoubtedly has a root in his works. James distinguishes between the cynical and sympathetic type.⁴²³ He writes that it is not

⁴²³ As opposed to *Pragmatism*, Babits did have *A Pluralistic Universe* in his library at home. About his

worth detailing the former but worth explaining the latter.⁴²⁴ Virgil Timár is not only tender minded, but he is also a deeply sympathetic character. Only he has a serious moral and emotional reality in the novel. His feelings become entirely spiritualised as a result of suppressing even the thought of an emotion. It also has fewer and fewer manifestations both outside and inside his mind as the story-line develops. The process of elimination of emotions centres around pain and loss, just like the process of suppression of emotions in Keats's verse. Finally it leads to the stage at which all feelings and emotions become entirely spiritualised even within the thoughts of his mind. The melancholic tone of the narration and the characterisation of a mind's emotional reality by the Virgilian fragments equals the detached tone of other verses by Keats, such as the 'Ode on Melancholy'.

Thus the logic of the spiritual story-line is that the only representative of dignified emotional and moral conduct chooses to leave the material world entirely. This context further heightens the melancholy of the spiritual story-line. It implies a criticism of society. This aspect of the novel's melancholy cannot be compared to any of the English verses above as there is no description of a contemporary society in these. The melancholy of the individual speaker in these verses, however, implies the same acute sense of resignation towards their poets' contemporary world.

thorough familiarity with William James works see footnote 20. James writes, 'The former defining the world so as to leave man's soul upon it as a sort of outside passenger or alien, while the latter insists that the intimate and human must surround and underlie the brutal. This latter is the spiritual way of thinking', William James, *A Pluralistic Universe* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: H. U. P., 1977), pp. 15-16.

⁴²⁴Ibid., pp. 19-20.

3.8 Virgil and Shakespeare in *Timár Virgil fia*

Babits's attitude and tone are also connected to his reading of Shakespeare in *Timár Virgil fia*. The contemporary political situation in Europe, among other things, determined Babits's interpretation of the English dramatist. My quotation from 'A Shakespeare-ünnephez' (1916) will illustrate Babits's major point:

A Shakespeare-jubileum megünneplése a háború alatt kétszeresen kötelességünk; ha valamikor, a nemzeti elnyomatás korszakában, az irodalom, már pusztá létével is, zsarnok önkény s erős cenzúra alatt, a nemzeti kultúra különállásának biztos jele és záloga volt; és testvériséget kell, minden önkény ellen, pusztá létével, dokumentálnia. Shakespeare neve igazán tipikusan jelentős erre az egységre.⁴²⁵

Apart from the importance of Shakespeare as a symbol of European cultural kinship, the other main theme of Babits's talk was his translation of *The Tempest*. He finished his translation of *The Tempest* at the time of this talk. During the war *The Tempest* became a mental refuge and a haven of peace for Babits:

Ez a fordítás—bármily csodálatosan hangzik is—a háború terméke. A *Vihar* Shakespeare legutolsó drámája—egy meghiggadt, rezignált életfilozófia műve, oly költőé, ki nem az életet festi többé, attól inkább menekülni akar. Menekülni egy álmovilágba, ahol valami nagy, bölcs és jó Sors előtt az élet minden viszályai, ellentétei elvesztik fontosságukat. [...] ez a hangulat vonzott a legjobban.⁴²⁶

The importance Babits attributed to Shakespeare because of his universality is on a par with what he felt towards Virgil as the fundamental European classic. The mood with which Babits found sympathy when translating *The Tempest* is the same as

⁴²⁵ 'To celebrate the Shakespeare anniversary during the war is our obligation for at least two reasons: if ever during the period of the nation's oppression, literature, even by its sheer existence, had represented the mark and basis of independent national cultures against tyranny and under strict censorship. Today it is the other way round, as it must represent the unconquerable unity and kinship of European culture against all forms of tyranny with its sheer existence. Shakespeare's name is especially significant to mark this unity, as among all the great writers,' Babits, *Esszék és tanulmányok*, (1978), i, p. 430.

⁴²⁶ 'This translation, however extraordinary that may be—is the product of the war. *The Tempest*, which is Shakespeare's last play, is the product of a calm and resigned philosophy of life by a poet who instead of wanting to paint nature preferred to escape from it. He wanted to retreat into a dream world, where all the vicissitudes and contradictions of life lose their importance before some wise and good providence. [...] This mood attracted me most', *ibid.*, p. 432.

that of Prospero's epilogue, and that of Prospero when he leaves the world of the play.

It is much like the mood of Babits's novel which is established by the narrator, and resembles Virgil Timár's when he comes to the end of his spiritual journey. At the end of *Timár Virgil fia*, the protagonists leave the story-line which is constructed partly from their actions. The ending reflects the mood of the whole piece, and characterises Babits's attitude and mood as well.

Babits's early verse provides proof of Babits's knowledge and transformation of themes which occur both in Virgil and in Shakespeare. Iris is a central character here. She originally occurs both in *The Aeneid* and *The Tempest*. She is the messenger of the gods. Babits used her as part of his flagship in the title of his first volume, *Levelek Irisz koszorújából* (1909), *Leaves from the Wreath of Iris*.⁴²⁷ She is also a key image of this volume. The title of 'Sunt Lacrimae Rerum' (1908) is from

⁴²⁷ See the lectures Babits delivered in Budapest (1919): 'Itt az az író, aki, mint Shakespeare, nem kritikai hajlamú, átéli az alakot, annak elég maga az élmény, az azt adja, ami az alakról őbenne marad. Nem keres helyette semmit, nem is mutat mögéje, maga az egész alak csak azt teszi, amennyi kívülről látható benne, mert minden meglátható benne a maga teljességében'; 'Here the author is like Shakespeare. Unlike the writer with a critical approach, he imagines that he is his character. He gives what there is in him on the basis of what his character experiences. He neither looks for anything else, nor points behind his character but the whole character becomes identical with his experience and does only what can be perceived of it from an external point of view, because it shows everything in its own entirety through him', Mihály Babits 'Az irodalom elmélete' (as delivered by Babits ELTE Budapest 7th May 1919), in *Mint különös hirmondó* (Budapest: Petőfi Irodalmi Múzeum and Népművelési Propaganda Iroda, 1983), p. 250. Thus *Levelek Irisz koszorújából* (1909) gives a colourful representation of the world through a wide range of literary forms in which the poet selects a variety of often dramatic voices, themes and settings. A few examples are: 'In Horatium' which begins with: 'Gyűlöllek: távol légy alacsony tömeg!', 'Himnusz Iriszhez' which begins with: 'Sötét van. Hol van ezer szín? Mivé lett?'. 'Aliscum éjhajú lánya' is a simulated quoted monologue of a woman which begins by: 'Fennhangon dobban a szívem' and finishes by 'a világot adja nekem!' Babits organised his poems into cycles in his original book, *Angyalos könyv*, whose manuscript can be read in the Hungarian National Library. The *Angyalos könyv* is introduced in *A keletkező szöveg esztétikája: genetikai közelítés Babits költészetéhez* ed. Ágnes Kelevéz (Budapest: Argumentum, 1999). The cycle entitled *Lirai festmények* has two mottos at the beginning. One is from Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du Mal* and the other from Browning's own motto to his *Dramatic Lyrics* (1842): 'being though often Lyric in expression, always Dramatic in principle, and so many utterances of so many imaginary persons, not mine', Robert Browning, *The Poems: Volume 1*, ed. John Pettigrew (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981), p. 347. Shakespeare and Browning also play a prominent role in Babits's second volume, *Herceg, hátha megjön a tél* is. The title of this volume reminds one of the words: '... O Wind, / If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?', 'Ode to the West Wind'. *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, ed. Donald H. Reiman and Sharon B. Powers (New York; London: Norton, 1977), p. 223.

The Aeneid. The title of Babits's second volume, *Herceg, hátha megjön a tél is* (1911), *Prince! Finally Even Winter might Arrive*. The first verse of this collection, *Ballada Irisz fátyláról* (1909), *Ballad on the Veil of Iris* is addressed, again, to Iris. This volume contains 'Névjegyemre' (1909), 'Onto my Name-card'. Babits cites Hamlet's speech to Horatio here, 'ég s föld között valókkal'.⁴²⁸ Iris appears in Babits's Virgilian intertext in her original function in *Timár Virgil fia*. One must observe that the intertwined Virgilian and Shakespearean roots of Babits's first two volumes of verse and his novel illustrate the sub-conscious dimensions of these pieces.⁴²⁹

In *Timár Virgil fia* Iris makes up for the shortcomings and for the lack of real women and dead queens such as Dido. One must bear in mind that Babits knew *The Tempest* by heart and that Dido is also a sub-theme in *The Tempest*. In connection with Alfonso's daughter, Claribel's and the King of Tunis's wedding she is humorously remembered as widow Dido.⁴³⁰ Through humour she receives the same forgiving treatment as in Babits. She is equal to her royal descendant, Claribel, on the throne. The difference in the author's degree of circumspection is that Shakespeare does not go so far as suicide and Babits's narrator forgives her and raises Dido above it. As opposed to the memory of Dido, Iris is part of a beautiful vision that Ferdinand and Miranda see in *The Tempest*. She is true to her original role when she is heralding Juno and celebrating 'a contract of true love'.⁴³¹ This will be realised in *The Tempest*. The magical reality of the play will fulfil this vision. In contrast with this, Iris remains

⁴²⁸István Gál, 'Babits egyes verseinek keletkezéséről', *Irodalomtörténet*, 2 (1975) (p. 61). The phrase Babits uses is from Act I, scene v, 166, 'There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio'.

⁴²⁹'Subtexts, therefore, and the intertextuality that sets them in motion, do not unfold along an axis of duration. Like the unconscious described by Freud, the unconscious of fiction and therefore, its truth, stands outside the realm of time and is impervious to its ravages', Michael Riffaterre, *Fictional Truth* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins U. P., 1990), p. 111.

⁴³⁰William Shakespeare, *The Tempest* (London: Arden, 1966), act I, scene ii, 65-129, pp, 46-49.

⁴³¹*Ibid.*, act IV, scene, i, 60-115, pp, 97-101.

an isolated phenomenon in Babits's novel. Potential love-affairs, such as the one in the island-type setting of the lawyer's garden disintegrate. The only real female character, who lacks any kind of magic, dies. Only Dido's soul is redeemed. Iris therefore remains the only attractive 'magical' female protagonist. She figures, however, only as a vision in Babits.

Virgil and Shakespeare are also associated with the issue of identity, origin and culture in Babits's first two volumes of verse. These themes are of central importance in Babits's novel. In *Timár Virgil fia* they are expressed in the fundamentally Virgilian identification of fatherhood and the role of the son with a moral and cultural mission. Shakespeare also wrote about these themes in *Hamlet* and in *The Tempest*, among other plays. In the world of *The Aeneid*, Aeneas' origin, cultural mission and history are the most prominent components of the story. He and the world in which he is the hero are in harmony even while he goes through his trials. In Shakespeare this is not always the case. Harmony can only be the outcome of a long process of conflicts. Heroes are not protected and carried by gods either. Babits's metatextual treatment of the originally Virgilian themes in his novel is slightly Shakespearean in this respect.

An interesting genetic link to observe is that Babits's interpretation of Shakespeare is firmly rooted in the German Romantic analysis of Shakespeare. A. W. Schlegel, for instance, observes the priority of reason over passion in the world of Shakespeare's plays. His ideas are in contrast to those of the Sturm und Drang. He claims that all the varied components of a Shakespeare play are subordinated to an all encompassing rational conception.⁴³² In his *Course of Lectures on Dramatic Art and*

⁴³²A. W. Schlegel writes in his *Geschichte der europäischen Literatur* (1803/04): 'Shakespeare hatte

Literature he specifies the depth of experience Shakespeare expresses with his intelligence: 'He unites in his soul the utmost elevation and the utmost depth; and the most opposite and even apparently irreconcilable properties subsist in him peaceably together. The world of spirits and nature have laid all treasures at his feet.'⁴³³ Herder also observes the wide range of existential forms that Shakespeare expresses. He also explains how the conflicts between the different ways and forms of existence finally become stages in a divine unity. Herder writes in connection with *King Lear*: 'Die Auftritte der Natur rücken vor und ab; wirken in einander, so Disparat sie scheinen; bringen sich hervor, und zerstören sich, damit die Absicht des Schöpfers, der alle im Plane der Trunkenheit und Unordnung gesellet zu haben schien, erfüllt werde—dunkle kleine Symbole zum Sonnenriß einer Theodicee Gottes'.⁴³⁴

One can see all these features in Babits's work. We can perceive the wide

mehr Verstand und Tiefsinn als Gefühl, Zärtlichkeit und Leidenschaft; diese sind bei ihm untergeordnet. Der Verstand herrscht über das Ganze... Der Verstand ist bei ihm nicht bloß witzig und scharfsinnig in der Ausführung des Einzelnen, sondern richtet sich tiefsinnig und geheimnisvoll auf das Bild des Ganzen, des Lebens und der Natur, das Rätsel der Welt', in Peter Gebhardt, *A. W. Schlegels Shakespeare Übersetzung* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1970), p. 114. My translation of this passage: Shakespeare was more reasonable and profoundly thoughtful and less sympathetic, tender and passionate. These were in subordinate position with him. Reason reigned over everything else. His reason is not solely piquant and acute in the elaboration of details but leads him profoundly and mysteriously towards the whole picture, and that of life and nature, and the mystery of the world. The same idea can be found in Schlegel's lectures, 'If the formation of a work throughout, even in its minutest parts, in conformity with the leading idea, if the domination of one animating spirit over all the means of execution, deserves the name of correctness', A. W. Schlegel, *Course of Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature* (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1846), p. 378.

⁴³³Ibid., p. 368.

⁴³⁴Herder, Goethe, Frisi, Möser, *Von Deutscher Art und Kunst* (Stuttgart, Philipp Reclam, 1999), p. 78. I have translated this sentence in the following way: The phenomena of nature move backward and forward. They all affect one another. Consequently, they seem incompatible. They create and destroy one another so that the intention of the gods should be fulfilled. The gods seem to have joined together intoxication and disorder in their plans. These are dark and small symbols of a cleft in the sun which is a part of God's wise order.

range of existential forms and the depth of experience in his novel. All the feelings and thoughts have their values defined through a process of conflicts too. These also become resolved and subordinated to a rational conception. This conception likewise acknowledges a divine order in the universe.

3.9 An interpretation of the novel on the basis of its Virgilian leitmotif

The Virgilian and Shakespearean features of the novel and its Anglo-Virgilian melancholy have concrete causes in Babits's attitude to his contemporary environment, and his intellectual role in it. As I have already outlined in connection with *The Tempest*, Babits did perceive the years previous to and contemporary with the writing of *Timár Virgil fia* as barbarian and anti-human. He was an adamant pacifist from 1915 onwards, which made him unpopular with the contemporary political leadership in Hungary. He tried to represent the highest ideals of European peace not only during these years but also all through his life. He prepared the anti-war piece appeal of the Union of European Knights with Ervin Szabó.⁴³⁵ His conception of an ideal Europe was a unity of national cultures. Both as a civilian and as an artist he tried to profess this ideal without any political or nationalistic affiliations.⁴³⁶ His recital of his plea for peace 'Húsvét előtt', 'Before Easter' was a courageous and officially unacceptable act at the Academy of Music in Budapest in 1916. This was during the same year as when he published his translation of *The*

peace

⁴³⁵György Rába, *Babits Mihály* (Budapest: Gondolat, 1983), p. 317.

⁴³⁶George Meredith, a favourite writer of Babits, who inspired Babits in the writing of his next novel: *Halálfiat*, had similar views. Meredith wrote in connection with the Franco-Prussian wars, 'I am neither German nor French. I am European and Cosmopolitan—for humanity! The nation which shows most worth, is the nation I love and reverence', Siegfried Sassoon, *Meredith*, 2nd edn. (London: Grey Arrow, 1959), p. 126. This attests to a parallel between Babits's and Meredith's attitudes to nationalism. It also shows one reason for which Babits was so fond of Meredith and his works.

Tempest. In 1917 an issue of *Nyugat* was banned for containing one of his most outstanding pacifist verses, 'Fortissimo'. He translated, published, and publicly wrote about Immanuel Kant's *Zur ewigen Ruhe* (1918). While he was teaching literature at the University of Budapest in 1919, the temporary commune attempted to use him as political bait. Even in this position he remained faithful to his principles, as a consequence of which he lost his job, salary and status. In an interview he gave in 1919, he said: 'A politikában minden túlzó iránynak, jobbról úgy, mint balról, ellensége vagyok. Egyébiránt, amint nem politizáltam a háború előtt, úgy nem akarok politizálni a háború után sem'.⁴³⁷ During the 1919 commune he wrote nothing political but worked on his translation of Dante's *Divina Commedia* which later won him the San Remo prize.⁴³⁸ (The dates of publication of his work are 1918 *Hell*, 1920 *Purgatory*, 1922 *Paradise*).⁴³⁹ In order to make his stance unambiguous, he published the essays 'Ágoston' (1917) and 'Leibnitz mint hazafi' (1917).

In the analysis of Babits's utilisation of English Romantic verse and the moral and emotional aspects of his novel's ending, I have demonstrated other sources of the overall melancholy in this novel. One can, nevertheless, even interpret the Virgilian theme of the novel as a modernist attempt to write a national epic on the basis of Virgil. The importance of the Shakespearean roots of fatherhood and the role of the son cannot be overlooked when reading this piece from this angle. The roles of the son and the two fathers in the story-line of *Timár Virgil fia*, however, can be viewed from the point of view of *The Aeneid* as well. In contrast to *The History of Henry*

⁴³⁷ 'I am against all extremism in politics both from the right and the left. I must make it clear that as I remained uninvolved in politics before the war, I am going to be likewise uninvolved after the war has finished', 'Itt a halk és komoly beszéd ideje' (1997), p. 47.

⁴³⁸ György Rába, *Babits Mihály* (1983), p. 319.

⁴³⁹ *Babits Mihály bibliográfia*, ed. Mária Stauder and Katalin Varga (Budapest: Argumentum, Magyar irodalom háza and MTA Irodalomtudományi Intézete, 1998), pp. 149-56.

Esmond where themes from *The Aeneid* are applied to characterise a personal story, in Babits's novel a variation of *The Aeneid* as a national epic is hidden in the story of the characters. Following Babits's reading of *The Tempest*, the final and dominant mood of his novel is resignation. This provides all the meanings of Virgil Timár's spiritual biography with a suitable mood, especially when one reads it as a metatextual prose adaptation of the Latin national verse epic.

Unlike most adaptations of *The Aeneid*, Babits's novel seems to use the first four books of *The Aeneid* only. Virgil had a son in Aeneas, who could continue what he had started, and Aeneas had a son in Ascanius, and in Julius who was predestined, according to Jupiter's words to Venus, to 'royal power each circling month for thirty long years'.⁴⁴⁰

The first intertext quotations about Dido are relevant for several reasons. Dido's story, whose end is summarised in the first quotation, is an objective correlative of unrequited passionate human love, whose parallel is the unsuccessful marriage of Pista's mother. The very first quotation can also be read as an objective correlative of the stage when, after Pista's mother's death, Virgil Timár can temporarily adopt Pista as his spiritual son.

Ascanius, both in Virgil's epic and according to Babits's intertext quotation, is first presented to the mind as an innocent child. He is completely oblivious to what is taking place around him. He knows nothing about the strategies of the gods and goddesses and their consequences on either himself or Aeneas. He is completely unaware of the trials which are ahead of his and Aeneas' mission. He is thus faithfully represented as the true possessor of innocent joy in the first Babits quotation. Pista's

⁴⁴⁰Virgil, *The Aeneid*, trans. W. F. Jackson Knight (1956), book I, line 270, p. 35.

position is similar to his. In the second intertext quotation Ascanius is shown as a child who clings to his father in the burning city, seeing no further than the security of his father. This can, however, only be a self-flattering objective correlative in Virgil Timár's mind about himself being the saviour of the child. In no way can it be applied from Pista's point of view since Pista does not cling to Virgil Timár in any way. At no stage in the novel does he hang onto either Virgil Timár as a father-figure, or Vitányi, his natural father. Pista is independent and individualistic in the sense of trying to be himself.⁴⁴¹

From a Virgilian point of view, the bench that Pista sets up for the celebration of his teacher's anniversary is the central image of the novel. This, again, hypertextually Virgilian setting is outside the school and the town on the top of Sun-hill. It is at the end of the path which passes through the cultivated vineyards of the Cistercians. The celebration is the peak of Virgil Timár's life. The intertext inscription on the bench is from the first canto of *The Aeneid*. It is a carefully chosen piece about Aeneas' arrival in Dido's land, which occurs after Aeneas is nearly killed at sea by the power of Aeolus' winds whose fury was raised by Juno's implacable anger. At this stage Aeneas has passed most of the terrible things that comprise Odysseus's trials in the *Odyssey*, lost many of his men, and has come to terms with losing his own life. Venus intervenes, however, and Neptune makes the sea calm. In the cave, which is Babits's chosen image in the inscription, Aeneas finds not only rest when nearly dead but also water. Aeneas' summary of their situation is: 'Friends of mine, we have long been no strangers to affliction, and you have had worse than this to bear [...] perhaps one day you will enjoy looking back even on what you now

⁴⁴¹The inserted episode focusing on the lawyer's family who treat him as one of them, and with whom he refuses to stay, also supports this.

endure'.⁴⁴² This is the stage of *The Aeneid* which Pista attaches to Virgil Timár, and can perhaps be interpreted as the 'correlative' of his own more grown-up self in the role of Aeneas. Whichever is the case, the selected words are presented in a rectangle.⁴⁴³

The last Virgilian intertext quotation is put into the context of a tempest outside, and depicts Dido's emotional torment over the loss of Aeneas. When Aeneas becomes conscious that he has to leave Carthage, Dido is shattered because she had loved him as a result of Juno's trick. In the context of the entire epic Queen Dido is also shattered because she loses the chance of becoming the royal founder of a nation through Aeneas. She loses the hope of a Trojan-Latin regal continuity for her people. In Babits's hypertext, the same sense of loss is expressed. It has an analeptic function. It refers back to the death of Pista's mother. Her demise symbolises the final severance of emotional and sexual ties between men and women in the novel. It also has a proleptic function. This is realised when, after the departure of his student, Virgil Timár remains entirely on his own. What Timár represents will also remain without a chance of continuity. He loses his descendent and a person for whom he could care directly. He then turns to St Augustine and the love of God.

By reading Babits's novel as a national verse epic which is executed through many emotional and moral conflicts, one can reconstruct several stories. Virgil Timár can be looked upon as the representative of his favourite author Virgil in the beginning. He is like Prospero in *The Tempest*, the originator of an *The Aeneid* type story-line in the novel. As a protagonist of the novel he has no son. It is at the first Virgilian image, the death of Dido, that he comes to look upon Pista as his son, and

⁴⁴²Virgil, *The Aeneid* (1956), book I, lines 195-200, p. 33.

⁴⁴³I have already quoted these words in my section of the story-line. See footnote 404.

ascribes the role of Aeneas to him. Aeneas is the spiritual son of Virgil as he was the creation of Virgil's intellect. Ascanius's image is a more appropriate image of Virgil Timár's adolescent spiritual son, Pista, than Aeneas, however. This is because Pista, just like Ascanius, is unaware of having a mission. His childlike personality is unable to take on the role of Aeneas. The cave is a place of rest after Aeneas loses his home and before his turbulent encounter with Dido. If we are to read this as Pista's interpretation of Virgil Timár in the role of Aeneas, the cave can be read as the Church and serves as a shelter. The water is emblematic of Virgil Timár's non-denominational and, at this stage, even non-Christian spirituality. Perhaps it also reflects Pista's own position in life, but this is less likely. Pista completely falls out of his role as a Virgilian spiritual son when his real father appears and claims him. This results in Virgil Timár's turning to purely transcendental Augustinian spirituality, thus giving up not only his role of imitating Virgil but also of being the representative of Virgilian conventions. Babits's point in the ending of the story-line is to show that the characters of the novel are unable to naturalise the Virgilian ideal. They choose other ways of life, such as Augustinian pure spiritual Christianity and worldly ways. This is what the melancholy and the resignation stand for when one reads the novel as a metatextual Virgilian national epic.

The Augustinian finish of the Virgilian theme also shows a trace of medieval cosmopolitanism. Babits speaks about this at the end of his section on Virgil. In contrast with his essay on Augustine, previously referred to, Babits does not include the image or the idea of *Civitas Dei* here. Instead of this he takes his Augustinian intertext quotation from the *Confessions* and writes only about an individual's conversion in the persona of the priest. This shows his disillusion with the Virgilian ethos from a European point of view, and the impossibility of *Civitas Dei*. The

Civitas Dei meant for Babits a history of grace between nations culminating in complete peace and redemption.⁴⁴⁴

3.10 Conclusion

Apart from the previously outlined features of moral and emotional attitude and tone, one may justly ask what else has English roots here. I maintain that the intertextual and hypertextual use of Virgil is more characteristic of English literary history than the Hungarian. The Shakespearean connotations also signify an English root. Timár's Christian name: Virgil coincides with the English spelling of Vergilius though it can be found in earlier Hungarian verse as well. The European literary and theological context of the Virgilian theme is also unusual in Hungarian literary. The Augustinian Christian and 'cosmopolitan' spirituality is a special feature of Babits's novel. Taking everything into consideration Babits's approach to his theme in *Timár Virgil fia* follows Latin, English, and European literary conventions rather than Hungarian ones.

⁴⁴⁴See also 'Augustus', in *Nyugat* (1917).

***Halálfiat* (1927) | CHAPTER 4**

4.1 Contents	158
4.2 An overview of Hungarian secondary literature on the novel	159
4.3 Society as portrayed in <i>Halálfiat</i>	171
4.4 The classical, European and English qualities of <i>Halálfiat</i>	175
4.4.1 Don Quixote	177
4.4.2 Concrete English References	181
4.4.3 Gothic crime story	187
4.4.4 Features of the Eighteenth-century English Novel of Adventure	188
4.4.5 Meredith	190
4.5 <i>Halálfiat</i>'s story-line and its English sources	195
4.6 Conclusion	209

4.2 An overview and interpretation of Hungarian secondary literature on *Halálfiái*

Among all Babits's novels *Halálfiái* (*Sons of Death*) is regarded as the most controversial. One must give a summary of this novel's criticism for two reasons. First because a literature survey of *Halálfiái* has not been done yet. Second because my survey will show the characteristics of the Hungarian literary attitude to this novel. It will illustrate how strange and sometimes incomprehensible Babits has appeared to Hungarian readers. The negative criticism of Babits's prose is more a symptom of misunderstanding than personal prejudice against the author. Béla G. Németh lists several reasons to explain Babits's unpopularity: 'Mert nagyfokú komplexitása és közmentalitással való szembenállása mellett bizonyos tagadhatatlan elbeszélési bizonytalanságok és módszerbeli határozatlanságok [...] jellemzik. [...] s kedvezőtlen fogadtatása s olvasottságának viszonylagos alacsony mértékéhez bizonyosan ezek is hozzájárultak'.⁴⁴⁵

Another cause of this symptom is that most critics have interpreted this novel from the perspective of French and German literary history. They have not noticed the relevance of its English roots. Babits spent eight years working on *Halálfiái*, and I, inter alios, find it a work of indisputable greatness.⁴⁴⁶

Dezső Szabó's is the most negative of all studies (1929).⁴⁴⁷ He considered

⁴⁴⁵Despite its complexity and sophistication, it can be characterised by narratorial and methodological [...] shortcomings. [...] These must have contributed to its unfavourable reception and its unpopularity. Béla G. Németh, *Babits a szabadtó* (1987), p. 51.

⁴⁴⁶*Halálfiái* has also attracted the attention of non-Hungarian readers. It has a complete Serbian [*Sinovi smrti*, trans. Aleksandar Tisma (Novi Sad, 1956)] and two complete Italian—*I figli della morte* (Milano, 1939) and *I figli della morte* (Milano, 1943)—translations. Parts of it were published in English ['One Day', *Hungarian Quarterly*, 4 (1938)] and in French [André Lazar, trans. 'Les Condamnés', *Panorama de la littérature Hongroise du 20e siècle*, 1 (1965). See *Babits Mihály bibliográfiái* (1998), pp. 277-78.

⁴⁴⁷Dezső Szabó, 'Filozopter az irodalomban', *Kritikai füzetek* 1 (1929), 1-47.

Halálfiái's narrator an affected and gregarious philosopher.⁴⁴⁸ He attributed the novel's affectation to over-sophisticated philosophising, and to Babits's over-indulgence in classics and English literature.⁴⁴⁹ His study is a satirical pamphlet. One must add that the excessively sharp exaggerating style is a characteristic of his works.⁴⁵⁰ Szabó was also a less sophisticated writer than Babits. As opposed to Babits, he was strongly nationalistic. He also believed in the educational role of literature. He did not think that people were able to make sense of Babits's prose.⁴⁵¹ He wanted literature to be more straightforward. Despite this belief he was often lonely. He was especially on his own towards the end of his life.⁴⁵² These facts explain the attitude of his pamphlet.

László Fülöp (1983) listed many West European and Hungarian works which were models of *Halálfiái*. He thought the central theme of the novel to be the decline of a certain class. He condemns Babits's work for being tied to the world it depicts, and therefore being uninteresting for a cosmopolitan readership.⁴⁵³ First, one must observe that the milieu of this novel is not restricted to Hungary exclusively. Second, one must notice that *Halálfiái* concerns itself with issues of universal interest such as

⁴⁴⁸Ibid., p.33.

⁴⁴⁹Ibid., p. 24.

⁴⁵⁰Merész, dinamikus szókapcsolással és szóalkotással élő stílusa első olvasásra általában magával ragad, másodikra azonban már nem egyszer modorosságaival visolyogtat'; 'On first reading, one is impressed by his bold style which is characterised by dynamic word coinage and phrasing. On second reading, however, one finds the affectation repulsive', *A magyar irodalom története*, ed. Tibor Klaniczay (Budapest: Kossuth, 1985), p. 339.

⁴⁵¹'Ha az új szociális hitet és pszichét az irodalom alakítja ki, és ha ez a kialakulás ki van téve a mindenféle olvasás lehetőségeinek: nem volna-e kötelesség a legszélesebb körbe irányítani ezt az olvasást'; 'If the new social faith and belief are created by literature, and if this creation is subjected to all kinds of possible interpretations, then would it not be an obligation to channel this kind of reading in a way that it reaches the widest audience', See Dezső Szabó, 'Az irodalom mint társadalmi funkció', in *Nyugat* 1 (1912), 755-763, and in *Az irodalom köztársasága: magyar irodalmi mozgalmak a huszadik század első felében* (Budapest: Múzsák, 1990), p. 26.

⁴⁵²Albert Tezla, *Hungarian Authors: A Bibliographical Handbook* (Cambridge Massachusetts: Belknap and H. U. P., 1970), p. 520.

⁴⁵³László Fülöp, 'A lírikus nagyregénye', *Alföld*, 11 (1983), 42-59.

investigation into characters and their interrelations with society.

Tamás Ungvári (1959)⁴⁵⁴ writes of the family's inability to survive and condemns burgeoning capitalism to be the clearest background to the novel. He is obviously wrong, because this is only a fraction of the novel's subject matter.

Ungvári rightly appreciates the detailed characterisation of *Halálfiái*'s people. He mentions Babits's utilisation of Meredith's fiction.⁴⁵⁵ He neglects to analyse this connection.

Lajos Kassák (1927)⁴⁵⁶ and Emil Kolozsvári Grandpierre (1943)⁴⁵⁷ had a negative assessment of Babits's work since they both approached the novel from the point of view of nineteenth-century French realist prose. Kassák based his approach more on the prevailing ideology of his time than on faithful interpretation. He expected literature to encourage socially active behaviour and show commitment towards a public cause. He found *Halálfiái* deficient in this quality and therefore condemned it.⁴⁵⁸ ^{Like} Such as Szabó, Kassák considered Babits's utilisation of classical and English literary sources an affectation. These two statements are examples of Béla G. Németh's view. According to his observation, this novel is out of tune with its prevalent contemporary world-view. One must make it clear that Babits's manner of depiction is not affected. It has its roots in other literary cultures which express things much less straightforwardly than early twentieth-century Hungarian literature did.

According to Emile Kolozsvári Grandpierre the realist novel tries to create a balance between the laws of fiction and real life. He compares *Halálfiái* to French

⁴⁵⁴Ungvári Tamás, 'Utószó', Babits Mihály, *Halálfiái* (Budapest: Európa and Szépirodalmi, 1959).

⁴⁵⁵Ibid., p. 326.

⁴⁵⁶Lajos Kassák, 'Halálfiái', in *Babits Mihály száz esztendeje* (1983), pp. 161-68.

⁴⁵⁷Emil Kolozsvári Grandpierre, 'Küzdelem az epikával', see *ibid.*, pp. 328-41.

⁴⁵⁸Lajos Kassák, 'Halálfiái', see *ibid.*, pp. 163-65.

novels. He claims that the novels of Stendhal, Flaubert and Balzac are exciting, action-packed, and the pivotal points of their story-lines are based on the consequences of foregoing actions. As opposed to these works, *Halálfiak* and Hungarian novels in general, are based on the consequences of the characters' passivity.⁴⁵⁹ Emile Kolozsvári Grandpierre classed the characters according to their inability to act. He could not see them as individuals but as shadows of individuals living in a world of appearance. I agree that it is possible to group the characters according to their passivity and sense of duty. I do not, however, find *Halálfiak*'s world illusionary. Babits depicts the causes and consequences of actions fairly faithfully.

Cecile Tormay (1982)⁴⁶⁰ and György Poszler (1978)⁴⁶¹ interpreted *Halálfiak* in the perspective of German cultural and literary history. They compared it to Thomas Mann's *Buddenbrooks*. According to Tormay: 'A dzsentirréteg, amelynek "genezise és kritikája" kíván lenni a Babits-regény, éppoly anakronisztikus és életképtelen társadalmi képződmény a 20. század fordulóján, mint Thomas Mann patrícius polgárai a 19. század második felében'.⁴⁶² The decline of three generations of a family is the common subject matter of both novels, she maintains.

One must make clarifications here. I find these two novels quite different despite the fact that their stories concern families. Babits's novel is much more

⁴⁵⁹Emil Kolozsvári Grandpierre, 'Küzdelem az epikával', in *ibid.*, p. 335.

⁴⁶⁰Cecile Tormay, 'A régi ház; Babits Mihály: *Halálfiak*', in Anna Mária H. Szász, *A huszadik századi családtörténeti regény* (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1982), pp. 142-63.

⁴⁶¹György Poszler, 'Magyar glóbusz vagy európai magyarság', in *Babits Mihály száz esztendeje* (1983), pp. 429-446 and also in György Poszler, *Eszmék eszmények nosztalgiák* (Budapest: Magvető, 1989).

⁴⁶²It aims at describing the "genesis and the shortcomings" of the gentry which was as much of an anachronistic and lifeless social layer in Hungary at the turn of the twentieth century as Mann's respectable merchants were in Germany at the second half of the nineteenth century', 'Cecile Tormay, *A régi ház; Babits Mihály: Halálfiak*', in Anna Mária H. Szász, *A huszadik századi családtörténeti regény* (1982), p. 152.

colourful. What László Fülöp claims about *Halálfiat* is a more appropriate observation in the case of *Buddenbrooks*. The milieu of *Buddenbrooks* is exclusively restricted to the world of German *Bürgertum* whose representatives are the Buddenbrooks. The family members vary according to their measure of success but they are all ordinary. Even their debauchery is within what is acceptable and is only briefly mentioned. Villains and spoilt barons do not manipulate the story of the German novel. People do not run away as far as Italy. Babits's characters are more individualistic. They move in and out of the several layers of society. Some of them do run away. Babits analyses the causes and consequences of their behaviour. It is also inaccurate to see Imrus's career as the manifestation of the family's irretrievable decline.

The history of the Buddenbrooks is much more pessimistic than the story of *Halálfiat*. The old generation, Consul Buddenbrook and his wife, hold the family together while they are alive. Their four children cannot maintain the prosperity of the firm. The eldest son Thomas takes over the firm from his father. He marries Gerda. Their only son Johann dies when still a child. Thomas Buddenbrook dies before reaching a mature age and leaves the business in a state of decline. His widow goes back home. Christian Buddenbrook has no children. He lives a debauched life. He spends all his inheritance as a result of his life-style. Frau Tiburtius née Clara Buddenbrook dies young. Frau Grünlich later Frau Permaneder née Antonie Buddenbrook spends most of her dowry and becomes divorced twice. She lives with her divorced daughter and grand-daughter, Erica Weinschenk and Elizabeth.

One can conclude that *Buddenbrooks* is far less optimistic than Babits's work. The old generation, which has authority and dignity in both novels, does not survive in the German novel. Cenci and Döme, however, do survive in *Halálfiat*. Cenci still

owns and carries on managing the family estate at the end of the novel. The young male representative of the Buddenbrooks, Johann, dies as a child whereas Imrus survives and has a chance of a new start in life. Other more or less successful characters survive in Babits's novel too.⁴⁶³

Babits writes that Mann expresses the controversies of middle-class life in his family novel.⁴⁶⁴ Babits's story addresses many other issues besides upper middle-class life. One can surely say that Babits's work is much more colourful in terms of its views of life and character. The sort of upper middle-class that Mann's fictional world is restricted to does not even exist in Babits's novel. The closest equivalent to it is the Scharpingers. They, nevertheless, only have a minor role in the story-line.

György Rába (1983) writes that although Babits's manner of description is different from Mann's, Mann's *Buddenbrooks* was his model of Mrs Cenci Rác's née Rédey's⁴⁶⁵ family history. György Rába calls *Halálfiái* a family chronicle in which Babits makes his reckoning and dispenses with his past.⁴⁶⁶ Rába claims that *Halálfiái* represents a world which is doomed. He sees George Meredith's and Marcel Proust's works as being Babits's models.⁴⁶⁷ I really cannot agree with him. Meredith as one root of this novel is correct, but Proust is only to a very small extent. Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past* is a complex and gentle analysis of the emotional subtleties of relationships. *Halálfiái* is more concerned about characters and their dependence on their families and society. It also has a firm psychological foundation, but it does not analyse emotional ties and attachments to the same depth as Proust's

⁴⁶³Thomas Mann, *Buddenbrooks: the Decline of a Family* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1945).

⁴⁶⁴Babits, *Az európai irodalom története* (1979), p. 453.

⁴⁶⁵György Rába, *Babits Mihály* (1983), p. 241.

⁴⁶⁶Ibid., p. 242.

⁴⁶⁷Ibid. pp. 245-46.

works. Babits's prose is much more lyrical than Mann's and far less lyrical than Proust's.

In contrast to Tormay and György Rába, Gyula Illyés (1935) regards *Halálfiái* as an account of the *education sentimentale*⁴⁶⁸ of its young protagonist, Imrus. Illyés maintains that the story of *Halálfiái* is more optimistic than its title suggests.⁴⁶⁹ He sees the story of the young son as promising. This is the point on which I agree with him. A process of sentimental education in the case of Imrus does make sense in the case of *Halálfiái*. It is still, however, only a fragment of the novel's overall subject matter. Ethics and society are more prominent issues than sentiments.

Like Tormay and Rába, György Poszler also reads this novel as a Hungarian variation of *Buddenbrooks*. He modifies Tormay's interpretation since he reads *Timár Virgil fia* as a companion piece to *Halálfiái*. He draws a parallel between Miska and Virgil Timár, and Hintáss and Vitányi in *Timár Virgil fia*.⁴⁷⁰ He considers the predominant characteristic of the novel to be:

Közelebbi latint, modernebb antikot választ. Nem annyira apollonikusát, inkább dionüszoszit. Görögöt, de nem egészen görögöt, hanem úgy görögöt, ahogy azt az angol esztéták, például Swinburne értelmezték. Latint, de későlatint, izgatottat, vibráló. A magyar századfordulóhoz hangszerelt latinitás ez, nem tisztán antik, inkább afrikai-középkori. Ezzel lép be a formálódó magyar kultúrába, és erről a bázisról ítél.⁴⁷¹

Poszler points out the passivity of the characters. He emphasises the responsibility of the characters for being a failure. This is because they are capable people who are

⁴⁶⁸ Illyés uses the term *education sentimentale* to describe the aspiration of Imrus who wants to break away from and rise out of the environment he comes from. See Gyula Illyés, 'Halálfiái', *Nyugat*, 9 (1935) (147-50), p. 148.

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid., pp. 147-50.

⁴⁷⁰ *Babits Mihály száz esztendeje* (1983), p. 437.

⁴⁷¹ 'He chooses a closer Latinity; a more modern type of the ancient; not so much Apollonian but Dionysian. Greek but not so much Ancient Greek but Greek in the way the English Decadent aesthetes and Swinburne regarded Greek. Latin but late Latin, an exciting and eventful kind. This Latinity is in tune with the Hungarian fin de siècle. It is not entirely Ancient but more like African medieval. This is how he starts off a new trend in Hungarian culture and judges from this basis', *ibid.*, p. 433.

also in touch with new Western ideals, and are still unable to improve their situation.

Poszler writes:

Nem a patrícius polgári dinasztiák hanyatlásának finom krónikája, hanem a magyar polgári progresszió elvetelésének zaklatott históriája. Furcsán összefonódó egymást kiegészítő, egymásnak felelő magyar arcélek, amelyek a generációk egymásutánjában követik és visszavonják, megvalósítják és perszifálják a nagy európai regénydinasztiák, a Buddenbrookok, Thibault-ok, Artamanovok, sőt egy irodalmi szinttel lejjebb keresve—a Forsyte-ok nemzedékváltását, sorsuk történelmi pályáját.⁴⁷²

I really do not agree with him. *Halálfiái* does not depict a world that is irretrievably doomed. Some of its people carry prospects of a successful future. One can also make perfect sense of *Halálfiái* without tracing its roots in European or Russian family novels. Babits describes his own novel as:

De az első elég magában is, egy metszet a Sors végtelen szövedékéből, alakokkal, kiknek átéltem minden idegzetűdését; miliók, melyeket az olvasó talán alig ismer, mint épp ama dunántúli borvárosokét is; egy házasságtörési regény a kilencvenes évekből, amikor ilyesmi volt a legnagyobb és legmodernebb szenzáció; a liberális magyar bíró regénye; egy társadalmi osztály genezise és kritikája; s egy *Entwicklungsroman* is, egy ifjúság története, úgy, ahogy van, minden romantika nélkül: éppoly távol a hazug eszményesítéstől, mint a naturalizmus szexuális romantikájától, mely talán nem kevésbé hazug.⁴⁷³

Poszler rightly regards Imrus as the odd one out among the characters.

According to him, Imrus represents everything the others lack and lacks everything the others have.

⁴⁷² 'This is not the gentle chronicle of the decline of middle-class dynasties but the frantic saga of the abortion of the professional middle-class's development in Hungary. It comprises a set of strangely interwoven and complementary characters arguing between each other, imitating and eliminating; embodying and mocking the gradual change that the generations illustrated in certain European family novels, such as the Buddenbrooks, the Thibaults, the Artamonovs, and the Forsytes, underwent', *ibid.*, p. 434.

⁴⁷³ 'The first part, however, suffices as a unit on its own. It is a cross-section from the infinite fabric of fate with characters whose nervous reactions I have fully felt and who are from milieus such as the Transdanubian wine towns with which the reader can hardly be acquainted with. It is a novel of adultery from the nineties when such a thing was looked upon as the greatest and latest sensation; the novel of a liberal Hungarian judge; that of the genesis and criticism of a social class; an educational novel; the creation story and objective criticism of a young generation without any romanticism. It is just as far from false idealization as from the sexual romanticism of Naturalism which is perhaps no less false than the former one', *Babits Mihály 'Itt a halk és komoly beszéd ideje' (1977)*, pp. 195-96.

Lajos Sipos thoroughly researched the genetic history of this novel. He reads (1979) *Halálfiái* according to the close analysis of its six chapters.⁴⁷⁴ On the basis of his findings about the genesis of the text, he confirms that Babits started to write a story of adultery first. He also claims that he then turned this into a family chronicle. As I have already demonstrated, this is only one aspect of this novel's interpretation. In another article (1976) Sipos shows that Babits aimed at a psychological analysis of the characters in a precise spatial and temporal setting.⁴⁷⁵ Sipos acknowledges the autobiographical features of the story-line. He rightly points out that the work is also an historical novel which is made up of a history of fathers and sons.⁴⁷⁶ He draws a parallel between the history of the Buddenbrooks and the Scharpingers.⁴⁷⁷ As I have already mentioned, the Scharpingers do resemble the Buddenbrooks since they are respectable bankers. Babits, however, does not demonstrate a decline in their family history. Sipos mentions that Babits's second, final version of the novel is more optimistic⁴⁷⁸ than its first version. His assessment of *Halálfiái* does not aim at investigating the literary roots of this novel but is fairly objective.

Another group of critics regard the novel in an entirely different light. Ignotus (1927) sees *Halálfiái* as an historical novel. He rightly tries to find the roots of its lyricism in works other than Proust. He claims St. Augustine's *Confessions* to be a model of *Halálfiái*.⁴⁷⁹ He finds its closest kin in George Meredith's and in Zsigmond Kemény's novels. He neglects to explain his reasons for making this claim. Ignotus

⁴⁷⁴Lajos Sipos, 'Adatok a *Halálfiái* geneziséhez', *Literatura*, 1 (1979), 54-72.

⁴⁷⁵Lajos Sipos, 'Az író és regénye: a *Halálfiáiról*', *Irodalomtörténet*, 2 (1976) (p. 322).

⁴⁷⁶Lajos Sipos, 'Adatok a *Halálfiái* geneziséhez' (1979) (p. 71).

⁴⁷⁷Lajos Sipos, 'Az író és regénye: a *Halálfiáiról*' (1976) (p. 325). The Scharpingers are natives of Sót. They resemble Hirschfeld and his family in *Kártyavár* since they have capital; money to enjoy and are in touch with contemporary West-European culture. Unlike the Hirschfelds they are not factory-owners but bankers.

⁴⁷⁸Lajos Sipos, 'Adatok a *Halálfiái* geneziséhez' (1979) (pp. 69-70).

⁴⁷⁹Ignotus, 'Jegyzet Babits regényéhez', *Nyugat* Budapest, 17 (1927), 312-16 (p. 313).

correctly interprets the novel as a story of a family's decline with a message of hope for a better future. One must observe, however, that there are many families in this novel. Some lose some of their members. Should one think of Cenci's descendants, they do not really show a tragic decline. Cenci loses one daughter. Her sons' family, and her grandson, are successful people in their own way.

Vilmos Szilasi (1889-1966) was a close friend of Babits's. Babits wrote part of *Halálfiái* in Feldafing. Szilasi (1927) considered this novel a masterpiece of Hungarian, indeed European literature. Szilasi praises it for its lyricism. He, too, considers its tone closest to that of St. Augustine's *Confessions*. Szilasi adds that Babits could have been briefer in his elaboration of story-line. He finds the characters noteworthy, and compares Babits's Nelli to Dickens's Agnes. Szilasi deems the character of Cenci attractive and unforgettable.⁴⁸⁰ He correctly attributes the abundance of metaphors and classical epic images in *Halálfiái* to Babits's imitation of Meredith's novels.⁴⁸¹ One might explain Szilasi's truly appreciative criticism by his thorough knowledge of Babits and his oeuvre.⁴⁸²

Gábor Halász (1941) also admired the characterization in *Halálfiái*. He maintains that Babits's main focus in *Halálfiái* is the purity of the son who becomes misled through his weakness but finally changes for the better. According to Halász's view, Babits aimed at depicting the fully matured state of the soul in contrast to the

⁴⁸⁰ Szilasi's letter to Babits, Feldafing (26 081927), *Babits-Szilasi levelezés*, ed. István Gál and Ágnes Kelevéz, (Budapest: Petőfi Irodalmi Múzeum, 1980), p. 112.

⁴⁸¹ Gábor Halász, 'A regényíró', *Babits Emlékkönyv*, ed. Gyula Illyés (Budapest: Nyugat, 1941); see also Gábor Halász: 'Babits, az olvasó', *Magyar Csillag* (1924) (462-3).

⁴⁸² Babits and Szilasi were close friends from their youth onwards. Their correspondence started in 1910 and lasted until the 1940s. Its sincerity and openness are comparable to those by Goethe and Schiller, and by Franz Kafka and Max Brod. They survived the First World War together. Babits wrote a part of *Halálfiái* at Szilasi's at Feldafing in July and August 1922. During this time Szilasi lectured at Freiburg. See *Babits Mihály levelezése 1890 -1906*, ed. Sándor Zsoldos (Budapest: Historia Litteraria-Korona, 1998), pp. 327-29. See also *Babits Mihály "Engem nem látott senki még.": Babits-olvasókönyv*, ed. Lajos Sipos, 2 vols. (Budapest: Historia Litteraria-Korona, 1999), i, p. 280.

poverty and a lack of intellectual fulfilment in people. I find this a justified way of reading the novel.

Sándor Hunyadi (1935) praises the depth of thought in *Halálfiái*. He deems:

‘És hol van az az író, akiben annyi optimizmus élne, hogy ilyen mélységet és sűrűséget követelő igényt merne föltenni olvasóiról?’⁴⁸³ Hunyadi maintains that the role of *Halálfiái* in Hungarian literature resembles that of *The Forsyte Saga* in English literature:

Görögség és latinság, a klasszikus génusz fénye világít e mű minden sora mögött. És mégis a *Halálfiái* jövőbelátóan modern és oly sajátságosan magyar, mint a *Forsyte Saga* angol.[...] Nem is próza ez, szinte vers, olyan tömör, olyan gondos, olyan numerosa van gondolatainak.⁴⁸⁴

One must notice that the critics who read the novel correctly are the most appreciative of it.

Béla G. Németh (1987) considers *Halálfiái* and *Tímár Virgil fia* to be Babits's best works. He claims that Babits's liberal humanist, Catholic-Christian, and Platonist view of history determines the type of realist novel he wrote. The novel's focus is therefore the right and obligation that all individuals have to fulfil their potentials. This is because of the precious quality Babits saw in human existence. Béla G. Németh mentions that a popularised version of physiology and biology is another basis of this novel.

Béla G. Németh's outline of the society portrayed in the novel and its historical background is interesting because of the parallel he draws between a

⁴⁸³‘Where is another writer who has so much optimism as to credit his reader with such great spiritual depth and gravity as this work demands?’, Sándor Hunyadi, ‘*Halálfiái*’, *Az Est*, 28 May 1935, p. 13.

⁴⁸⁴‘Every line of this novel testifies to the light of classical genius, Greek and Latin. Still *Halálfiái* is a modern novel, since it is an attempt at a new kind of novel and as exclusively Hungarian as the *Forsyte Saga* is English.[...] It is prose but it approaches verse because of the thorough painstaking rhythm with which it expresses its thoughts’, Sándor Hunyadi, ‘*Halálfiái*’ (1935), p. 13.

Hungarian class and an English class. He not only turns away from the presupposition of dominant German and French models, but also tries to base some of his interpretation on English roots. He deems that the society to which the characters of *Halálfiái* belong is often called “*lateiner*”. This is the minor land-owning class which learnt Latin at school, and often entered the civil service in the 1870s:

A réteg jellegmeghatározó magva azonban öntudatosan az angol (s a nyugati) középosztály hazai megfelelőjének, azaz nemesi eredetűnek, széles vidéki rokonságúnak, életvitelében fölényesen úrinak, hivatottságában középszintű irányítónak tudta és hirdette magát.⁴⁸⁵

The demeanour of this class can be described as family-centred. It considers blood relations as very important. Its society is patriarchal and paternalistic. Men are supposed to have a strong interest in politics and women a down-to-earth quality. They rise above politics and perform the simple functions of life (Cenci).

From the point of view of its descriptive power, Béla G. Németh rightly considers it as one of the best Hungarian realist novels:

Mégpedig azért, mert a társadalmi szerkezet és emberi kölcsönviszony, az egyszeri cselekvés és az öröklött világfelfogás, a korra jellemző életszemlélet és a csoportra jellemző szokásrend mögött a mindezeket összefogó és mindezeknél szélesebb és mélyebb átlengő *lelkiséget* olyan sokoldalúan, olyan atmoszférikusán, az egyedi tudat olyan rejtett mélyeibe hatolva tudja megjeleníteni, mint Kosztolányit és Keményt leszámítva megközelítően sem senki.⁴⁸⁶

Like some other critics Németh also mentions that Babits could have made *Halálfiái* less verbose. He comments on the semi-autobiographical quality of the novel. He sees the portrayal of the young protagonist, Imrus, as its best example. He

⁴⁸⁵‘The core that defined the character of this society professed itself the equivalent of the Western but especially the English middle class. This class came from a titled background had a wide circle of relations in the country, enjoyed an ostentatious life, and chose to work in the middle ranks of the civil service’, Béla G. Németh, *Babits, a szabadító* (Budapest: Tankönyvkiadó, 1987), p. 53.

⁴⁸⁶‘His description of people’s demeanour contains not only the structure of society and human relations but also the relationship between an action and the inherited world-view which is characteristic of the age. It also presents the set of customs that characterizes a group of people. The all encompassing spirituality which is behind these subject matters is wider and deeper than them. He depicts this in such a many-sided and atmospheric way that it creeps into the innermost depth of human consciousness. Apart from Kosztolányi and Kemény he is without a rival in Hungarian literature from this point of view’, *ibid.*, p. 61.

stresses the universal features of *Halálfiái* such as the Biblical parallels of Rachel and Lea and Martha and Mary in the case of Erzsi and Nelli; classical similes; the abundance of metaphors and allegories with a moral message, and a manifestation of Babits's belief in the fight of good and evil forces in human beings and in the world. According to Béla G. Németh, these features show that Babits's novel follows European and English conventions of novel-writing. I must clarify, again, that Babits's elaborate metaphorical style is unlike that of *Buddenbrooks*. Mann's novel is a predominantly matter-of-fact description of the everyday life of its characters. I infer that this is what György Rába means when he writes that Mann's manner of description is different from Babits's.

This critical survey has aimed at showing the cause of *Halálfiái*'s unpopularity with many Hungarian critics. One cannot really make perfect sense of this novel by comparing it to German and French models. One can rightly read *Halálfiái* less as a follower of Continental novels, such as *Buddenbrooks*, and more as a hypertextual transposition of nineteenth-century English novels, such as Meredith's, Thackeray's, Dickens's and George Eliot's fiction.

4.3 Society as portrayed in *Halálfiái*

My summary of the characters of *Halálfiái* will support my views on the Hungarian criticism of this novel. Apart from Babits's concrete mention (intertext) of the '*dramatis personae*'⁴⁸⁷ the author's note attached to the end of this novel emphasizes that his characters are not imitations of real people, since he created them. Babits writes this despite the autobiographical background of *Halálfiái*. It is worthwhile

⁴⁸⁷*Halálfiái* (1984), p. 43. Babits uses this term as I am quoting it here italicised.

considering this paradox when one interprets the novel. The characters are not really inactive and illusionary as some Hungarian critics maintain. They do have a dramatic edge. Their world is therefore not only like a historical tableau but also realistic.

Halálfiái starts with the death of the *pater familias*, Rácz Józsi. His death is a metaphor for the disintegration of Hungary. His widow Cenci remains left with their four children: Jozsó, Imre, Jolán, and Nelli. Döme is Cenci's brother.⁴⁸⁸ He is a lawyer specialising in constitutional law. He is nostalgically committed to the 1848 ideals of Hungarian independence. Cenci's son, Ákos, intends to study in Budapest but dies at a young age as a result of debauchery and consequent pneumonia.⁴⁸⁹ Nelli is married off to a local boy, Miska.⁴⁹⁰ He marries her when he is a qualified judge. He is not only strict with himself but also with his family and friends. Nelli lacks character and ideals. She is contented to be a house-wife and a caring mother. Döme patronises her and her son in Sót. Cenci's son Jozsó lives in Budapest. He marries Erzsi. They are a respectable middle-class couple. Erzsi has all the virtues of a good housewife.⁴⁹¹ They are heirs to 'the family vineyard' and have no children. Cenci's other son, Imre, dies when he is still young. Her other daughter, Jolán, remains a spinster. She will survive

⁴⁸⁸Babits's maternal grandmother, Innocencia Rácz Hidvégi, inspired the character of Cenci in *Halálfiái*. Babits based Döme's character in the novel on his maternal great-grandfather, Mihály Kelemen who was a lieutenant in the medical corps during the 1848-1849 War of Independence.

⁴⁸⁹The characters recorded by Babits in his notes show that Babits originally planned to link the history of his family and the literary characters in his novel more closely and in a much more structured way. According to these notes he would have used his mother and her original name, Aurora and his second cousin, and her maiden name Valéria (Geiger) Dienes. He planned to create two separate characters for a son in *Halálfiái*, that is the son of Mrs Innocencia Rácz József Kelemen; Babits's cousin, Ákos who died when young on the one hand and Cenci's nephew, Imre Újfalussy who died from pneumonia at an early age on the other. See Lajos Sipos, 'Adatok a *Halálfiái* geneziséhez', *Literatura*, 1 (1979) (54-72), 59.

⁴⁹⁰Miska's character was certainly inspired by Babits's father who was a strict person with a commitment to justice. See introduction and also György Belia, *Babits tanulmányai* (1983), p. 20.

⁴⁹¹Both Jozsó and Erzsi and Jolán have virtues which are characteristic of the Victorian Age. Apart from novels, papers, and art works from this period, see (the exhibition 'The Victorian Vision' which took place in the V & A between 5th April and 29th. July 2001, and its catalogue) *The Victorian Vision*, ed. John M. Mackenzie (V & A Publications, 2001), and ('Representing Britain' in the Tate Britain from 24th March 2001, and on the catalogue of this exhibition,) Martin Myrone, *Representing Britain 1500-2000*, 100 works from the Tate collection (London: Tate, 2000).

her sister, Nelli, and Miska. The other family in the novel is from the same provincial background and their lives become interwoven with Cenci's family. Gyula Hintáss does his legal training in Budapest with Miska. He meets his wife Erzsi while a student. Erzsi reads French novels. She is discontented and feels out of place in the provincial town. Gyula and Erzsi are discontented with the routine of every day life. They also live beyond their means. They are trouble-makers. They behave dramatically and the narrative's description of their conduct is also dramatic. The Scharpingers are also one of the local families in Sót. Their role resembles that of the Hirschfelds in *Kártyavár*. They are introduced when Döme, Gyula Hintáss, Erzsi, Miska and Nelli are already living there. They are not only a Jewish banking family but, like the Hirschfelds, are also in touch with contemporary West European culture. They are more charitable than the Hirschfelds and sponsor local literary activities. Imrus grows up with the two Hintáss girls. He is truly fond of Noémi. Later on, Noémi starts working for the Scharpingers. The old Scharpinger's son, Manó, becomes Noémi's boss. They strike up an affair towards the end of the novel. Gitta and Noémi both lack the dramatic behaviour of their mother. Gitta is a haughty, but not unpleasant, blue-stocking. Noémi is gentler and has a fickle nature. She is not only more beautiful than Gitta, but also allows herself to be misled easily. Imrus is likewise easily misled. He makes many mistakes before finding his place. The youngest character of the novel is Gyula's and Nelli's son, Dodo. He is their only child and has a playful nature.

Many minor characters have important roles in *Halálfiat*. One of these is the young poet, Laci Kovács, who is murdered in debauchery. Another is the young baron, Gida, who is present at the night of the murder. He becomes drunk and throws money at Laci irresponsibly. Laci is murdered because of this money. The family

doctor and Imrus's university mates in Budapest are also examples of relevant minor characters. The description of Transylvania where Imrus teaches gives an idea of the society in Erdővár.⁴⁹²

Apart from the fact that the background of the family in *Halálfiái* is agricultural, the society of the novel is outlined as groups of people related by blood-ties. As in, for example, *Middlemarch*⁴⁹³, the main characters come from only a few families which are in close contact with each other. Just like in the English novel, even the wider sphere of the characters is strictly restricted to a particular society.⁴⁹⁴

⁴⁹²Erdő means 'forest' and vár 'castle'.

⁴⁹³Even in the structure of closely related and connected provincial society one can see the parallels between *Middlemarch* and *Halálfiái*. All the main characters in both novels are connected, related, and originate from the same background. In *Middlemarch* the Vincys and the Garths are the two established families. Though from the same background and connected to them, the Casaubons and Ladislaws including Dorothea Brooke, are outsiders compared to them. They have new ideas which make them out of place. Lydgate is also like them because he goes to Paris and returns educated and with foreign ideas of medicine. In *Halálfiái* Döme, Cenci and the Sharpinger family represent the settled conventional way of life. The descendents of their families intermarry such as the families in *Middlemarch*. Miska, Gyula, Imrus and Erzsi become out of place: Miska and Imrus, because of their high level of education; Erzsi because of the time she spends in Budapest, her French ideas of fiction and her consequent discontentedness; Gyula, because he becomes a criminal and Nelli because she joins him. What is good in *Middlemarch* as opposed to *Halálfiái* is that the 'younger' generation with the new unconventional ideas (Lydgate and Ladislav) and fantasies (Dorothea) can settle down and coexist with the established families. See George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, ed. Rosemary Ashton (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1994).

⁴⁹⁴Stone writes in connection with *One of our Conquerors*: 'In its own way Radnor's circle is as representative and unified as the Middlemarchers, but, if George Eliot's community is itself a controlling force of its inhabitants' destinies, the Radnor circle is under the baton of one man', *Novelists in a Changing World* (1972), p. 158.

4.4 The classical, European and English qualities of *Halálfiat*

Halálfiat undoubtedly abounds in classics-based tropes. It contains many references to themes and characters in Homer, Virgil, other classical plays, Dante, and the Bible. These allusions often carry a moral connotation and form a network.

This referential system demonstrates a way in which Babits followed European and English conventions of fiction. Reoccurring classical similes of the novel are the comparison of Uncle Döme to Agamemnon,⁴⁹⁵ Cenci to the Sybils, Nelli to Helen of Troy, and Imrus to Don Quixote. This trope system is consistent and meaningful.

Like Agamemnon in *The Iliad*, Döme is a leading character all through the story of the novel. Following his model, Döme is uncompromisingly committed to his principles. His political stance has priority over his family ties. His is like the Greek hero from this point of view, too. Agamemnon sacrifices his daughter, and Döme will refuse to receive visitors or make an allowance to his nephew's *naïve* credulity, because of his uncompromising commitment to what is right and wrong.

Cenci's indomitable powerfulness is equal to the Sybils. She is not prone to ailments or even death in *Halálfiat*. Nelli is a central female character like Helen of Troy. She is kidnapped by Gyula from her rightful husband. In sharp contrast to Helena, she never becomes reunited with her husband or is depicted as living with her kidnapper in afterlife. She is a contrast to her classical model.

Imrus is likened to Don Quixote. It is his *naïve* idealism and inherent goodness that makes Imrus most akin to the old knight: 'Imrusban e váratlan

⁴⁹⁵ *Halálfiat* (1984), p. 157.

megszólításra, a szolgálatkész Don Quijote ébredt föl'.⁴⁹⁶ He does not even doubt the innocence of his girlfriend.

One must emphasise the importance of Virgil's *Georgics* as a source of this novel. A principal ideal of the *Georgics* is agriculture, because of the stability that lies in the cultivation of the land. Virgil writes the following about rural occupations:

But still the farmer furrows the land with his curving plough:
The land is his annual labour, it keeps his native country,
His little grandsons and herds of cattle and trusty bullocks.
Unresting the year teems with orchard fruit, or young
Of cattle, or sheaves of corn
Brimming the furrows with plenty, overflowing the barns.⁴⁹⁷

The cultivation of vineyards which is the basis of the family's origin and stability in

Halálfia is also a branch of wholesome agriculture in Virgil. Another piece of

Babits's source:

Now the vines are tied, the plants are done with pruning,
The last vine-dresser sings over their finished labours,
Yet still you must keep the soil busy, the dust on the move,
And watch apprehensively the weather that threatens the
ripening grape⁴⁹⁸

The system of classical tropes and the Latinity is not an affectation, as some critics maintain. It is a feature typical of a certain convention of novel writing. One can see the roots of it in Thackeray⁴⁹⁹ and Meredith for instance. Babits indicates his affinity with this style of writing when he uses its devices.

⁴⁹⁶Babits, *Halálfia* (1984), p. 354.

⁴⁹⁷Virgil, *The Eclogues The Georgics* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), book II, lines 512-518, p. 86. The same ideal is the principle of the idea in Spencer's *Faery Queen*. It is a fundamental concept in Thomson's *Seasons*, in Romantic verse such as in Wordsworth's, Burns's and later Tennyson's oeuvre. See *The Tradition of Virgil: Three Papers on the History and Influence of the Poet* by Junius S. Morgan, Kenneth McKenzie and Charles G. Osgood (Princeton: P. U. P., 1930), pp. 28-33.

⁴⁹⁸Virgil, *The Eclogues The Georgics* (1999), book II, lines 414-19, p. 83.

⁴⁹⁹A description of allegorical-referential skeleton of early Thackeray was done by John Loofborough, *Thackeray and the Form of Fiction* (Princeton N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1964).

4.4.1 Don Quixote

Babits's references to Don Quixote links him to Cervantes. It also connects his works to many of his English precursors, because the Don is also a popular figure of English fiction. Gillian Beer summarises the universal features of his person. These are what most authors utilise:

Don Quixote represents the idealization of the self, the refusal to doubt inner experience, the tendency to base any interpretation of the world upon the personal will, imagination and desire, not upon an empirical and social consensus of experience.⁵⁰⁰

Babits uses all these features in his Quixotic characters. His own summary of the Spanish hidalgo is less universal and more allegorical than Beer's. He writes in

Halálfiat:

Ez a Sancho Panza nem szűnik döfködni Don Quixote-ját; s ha Don Quixote alszik, álmában döfködi. Don Quixote nem éhes: de Sancho Panza mindig éhes. Vajon igaz-e, hogy Don Quixote nem éhes? Nem inkább úgy van-e, hogy Sancho Panza is Don Quixote éhségét érzi ezúttal? [...] Don Quixote mintha időgépen utazott volna ide: egyedül volt és anakronisztikusan.⁵⁰¹

The above quoted extract also contains a reference to H. G. Wells's *Time Machine* which becomes relevant in connection with Babits's next novel: *Elza pilóta*. The Quixote-Panza partnership is more likely to refer to Döme and Imrus and less likely to allude to Imrus and Rosenberg. Both Imrus and especially Döme are old-fashioned and idealistic characters who live in their own old-fashioned world. Imrus says about Döme: 'Lucifert mindannyian inkább vállalnók, mint Don Quijotét, s Imrus romantikus ködöt árasztott magából erre a szövetségre, melyet maga sem tudta mért,

⁵⁰⁰Gillian Beer, *The Romance* (London: Methuen, 1970), p. 42.

⁵⁰¹'This Sancho Panza does not cease prodding his Don Quixote. He prods him in his dreams when he falls asleep. Don Quixote is not hungry but Sancho Panza never ceases starving. Is it true that Don Quixote is not hungry? Is not it that Sancho Panza feels Don Quixote's hunger in this instance? [...] As if Don Quixote came here on a time-machine. He was lonely and old-fashioned', *Halálfiat* (1984), pp. 566-67.

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egy kicsit szégyellt önmaga előtt'.⁵⁰² After this Imrus is compared to Don Quixote again at the end of the novel: 'Don Quijote látszólagos nyugalmaiban volt valami hősi'.⁵⁰³

Don Quixote did not only reach Babits through the work of Cervantes. As I have already mentioned, Don Quixote also reached Babits through his favourite English writers. The original figure must have been the main source of inspiration for Babits but his English models must have further strengthened and coloured his use of this character. In *Kártyavár* Partos is principally modelled on Don Quixote and then on Pickwick who is also a descendent of the old knight.⁵⁰⁴ Apart from Dickens, many other English authors used the archetype of Don Quixote as a model of their characters.

Not only is Pickwick⁵⁰⁵ based on Don Quixote, but also Mr Jarndyce in *Bleak House*: "“You will lose the disinterested part of your Don Quixote character,” said Lady Dedlock to Mr. Jarndyce, over her shoulder again'.⁵⁰⁶ A 'suit and armour containing Don Quixote' in Chesney Wold'⁵⁰⁷ alludes to the Lady's husband's, Sir Leicester's character itself.

Thackeray frequently adapted the figure of the errant knight in his novels. In an enthusiastic comment on *Don Quixote* he emphasises the value Don Quixote's honest *naïveté* represents in a world which does not treat him very well: 'I read *Don Quixote* nearly right through when I was away. What vitality there is in those

⁵⁰² 'We would all rather take responsibility for Lucifer than for Don Quixote. Imrus radiated a romantic air at the thought of this alliance of which, though he did not know why, he felt a little ashamed', *ibid.*, p. 390.

⁵⁰³ 'There was something heroic in the seeming calm of Don Quixote', *Halálfiat* (1984), p. 574.

⁵⁰⁴ See footnotes 249.

⁵⁰⁵ See footnote 216.

⁵⁰⁶ *Bleak House* (1948), p. 255.

⁵⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 406.

characters! What gentlemen they both are! I wish Don Quixote were not thrashed so very often'.⁵⁰⁸ This is often the case with Imrus, too. He is punished even when his mistake is the consequence of Gyula's forceful behaviour. He is also undeservedly deceived by Noémi.

In George Eliot's *Middlemarch* Lydgate dislikes it when Dorothea is identified with the archaic character of the old knight: 'Lydgate did not stay to think that she was Quixotic'.⁵⁰⁹ This can be compared to Döme's loyalty towards Cenci. This is unlikely to be a direct link, but a valid parallel. All the English Quixotic allusions, however, must have at least subconsciously contributed to the workings of Babits's mind when he was shaping his characters.

Another favourite English novelist of Babits, Meredith, also modelled heroes on Don Quixote. Sir Austin in *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* and Roy and Beltham in *Harry Richmond* are a couple of old fashioned heroes with old fashioned principles. Donald D. Stone writes: 'Harry's two mentors are incapable of change, unlike the hero, and as such join the great 'unteachable' creations of literature, like Falstaff and Don Quixote'.⁵¹⁰ As I have already remarked, Babits's Imrus also finds it hard to learn his lesson in real life. He is almost unteachable until the very end when he starts working.

Babits was also well acquainted with Walter Scott's *Waverley*.⁵¹¹ This novel was based on the Spanish tale too: 'perhaps anticipate in the following tale, an

⁵⁰⁸W. M. Thackeray's, *Newcomes* (London: John Murray, 1920), p. xxiv.

⁵⁰⁹George Eliot, *Middlemarch* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1994), p. 763.

⁵¹⁰Donald David Stone, *Novelists in a Changing World: Meredith, James and the Transformation of English Fiction in the 1880s* (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1972), p. 111.

⁵¹¹'mint Walter Scott, aki a látható embert kereste a múltban, vagy a történettudósok közül Augustin, Thierry, Michelet és mások', 'such as Walter Scott who looked for the invisible man in the past, or Augustin, Thierry, Michelet and others amongst the historians', Mihály Babits, 'Az irodalom elmélete' (12. 05. 1919.) in *Mint különös hírmondó* (1983), p. 255. Also Babits, *Az európai irodalom története* (1979), p. 300, 315, 365-366, 393, 408,

imitation of the romance of Cervantes'.⁵¹² It is likewise possible to read Babits's story as an ingenious reworking of the Spanish romance.

Another of Babits's hypotexts, *Tom Jones*, also contains a description of an old-fashioned charming character such as Squire Western. Fielding writes in his novel:

IN WHICH IS INTRODUCED ONE OF THE PLEASANTEST BARBERS THAT WAS EVER RECORDED IN HISTORY, THE BARBER OF BAGHDAD NOR HE IN *Don Quixote* NOT EXCEPTED.⁵¹³

A male character with this type of old-fashioned charm does not exist in *Halálfiat*.

The gravity and heaviness of Miska's, Döme's, and even Imrus's characters is in sharp contrast to that of Squire Western. This is a valid claim in the case of all Babits's eighteenth-century sources.

The Expedition of Humphrey Clinker also provided Babits with a model of an old-fashioned world: 'Here he was interrupted by my uncle; who asked peevishly, if he was Don Quixote enough, at this time of the day, to throw down his gauntlet as champion for a man who had treated him with such ungrateful neglect'.⁵¹⁴ Babits knew *Roderick Random* too.⁵¹⁵ This work does not lack allusions to *Don Quixote* either: 'when Cervantes, by an inimitable piece of ridicule, reformed the taste of mankind, representing chivalry in the right point of view'.⁵¹⁶

The above analysed sources all contributed to Babits's colourful application of the naïve but principled knight's archetype. As I have already mentioned, one can see

⁵¹²Walter Scott, *Waverley* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 18.

⁵¹³Henry Fielding, *The History of Tom Jones, A Foundling* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1997), p. 347.

⁵¹⁴Tobias Smollett, *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 68.

⁵¹⁵Smollett, *Lesage követője, brutális humorral ír, és tengerészkaraktereket fest*, Mihály Babits, *Az európai irodalom története* (1979), p. 212.

⁵¹⁶Tobias Smollett, *Roderick Random* (London: Dent and New York: Dutton, 1967), p. 4. For a reference to 'Dulcinea' see pp. 301, 324.

colourful versions of Don Quixote in many of his characters such as Partos, Miska, Imrus and even (Cenci and) Döme.

4.4.2 Concrete English References

There are concrete English references in *Halálfiat*. A few of these are Nick Carter and the English detective story,⁵¹⁷ Gulliver, Robinson,⁵¹⁸ Chaucer,⁵¹⁹ Byron,⁵²⁰ Ruskin,⁵²¹ Meredith,⁵²² Oscar Wilde,⁵²³ *Coriolanus*,⁵²⁴ *Hamlet*,⁵²⁵ *King Lear*,⁵²⁶ *Illustration* and *Illustrated London News*,⁵²⁷ Walter Crane and William Morris,⁵²⁸ Macaulay,⁵²⁹ Darwin,⁵³⁰ Spencer,⁵³¹ *five-o'clock*,⁵³² *Good morning*⁵³³ and *Mene Tekel Fárezs*.⁵³⁴ These stand out of the Hungarian text, and draw our attention to the English source material. A few of these references characterise sometimes a situation and at other times a character in the novel.

Miska reads crime stories in which the famous detective is Nick Carter.⁵³⁵ A feature of these stories is witty innocence. They are not only entertaining and instructive, but also show a strong commitment to justice.⁵³⁶ They manifest one

⁵¹⁷*Halálfiat* (1984), p. 431.

⁵¹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 233.

⁵¹⁹*Ibid.*, p. 326.

⁵²⁰*Ibid.*, p. 431.

⁵²¹*Ibid.*, p. 367.

⁵²²*Ibid.*, p. 461.

⁵²³*Ibid.*, pp. 303, 384, 518.

⁵²⁴*Ibid.*, p. 428.

⁵²⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 296-97.

⁵²⁶*Ibid.*, 405.

⁵²⁷*Ibid.*, p. 380.

⁵²⁸*Ibid.*, p. 303.

⁵²⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 9, 14.

⁵³⁰*Ibid.*, p. 367.

⁵³¹Herbert Spencer's constitutional ideals were sources of *Kártyavár*. See footnote 301. See also *Babits Mihály levelezése 1890-1906* (1998), pp. 72, 76, 91, 110, 114, 156, 423.

⁵³²*Halálfiat* (1984), p. 522.

⁵³³*Ibid.*, p. 392.

⁵³⁴*Ibid.*, p. 418.

⁵³⁵See footnote 272.

⁵³⁶One of Smith & Street's most enduring recurring characters, Nick Carter started as a boy detective in 1886. In 1915 his pulp changed to Detective Story Magazine, an important prototype for the hardboiled

particular kind of interest Miska has. A more dominant side of his character is shown by his preoccupation with more philosophical authors. He takes notes on Kant's legal order, and Macaulay's tenets on excessive intellectual freedom. These authors are part of the subject matter of the book he reads. This might even be an old law textbook.⁵³⁷ Macaulay's arguments on the importance of education could well have been one root of Babits's principles. They both believed that the more information people have the better they can judge. They also maintained that mass education can prevent crime. Education is for the benefit of everyone.⁵³⁸

Gyula's behaviour is described as Byronic. He is compared to Don Juan when he stays with Nelli in Venice.⁵³⁹ The interior of the Scharpingers' home is characterised by being in the style of Walter Crane (1845-1915)⁵⁴⁰ and William Morris (1834-96).⁵⁴¹ These artists are referred to as the pioneers of the political philosophies

school of pulps which followed' [...] One of these magazines was the *New Nick Carter Weekly by Command of the Czar* (New York: Street & Smith, 1905). See <http://ie.search.msn.com/en-gb/srchasst/srchasst.htm>. On the same site one can read *Nick Carter, Detective: The Solution of a Remarkable Case by a celebrated author* in Nick Carter Detective Library, No. 1 (New York: Smith & Street, n. d.).

⁵³⁷ *Halálfiat*, p. 14.

⁵³⁸ 'We all, Churchmen, Presbyterians, Independents, Baptists, Methodists, have an interest in this, that the great body of the people should be rescued from ignorance and barbarism. [...] so is every man, to whatever sect he may belong, bound to contribute to the support of those schools on which, not less than on our arsenals, our common security depends', Thomas Babington Macaulay, 'Education' (1847), in *Selected Writings*, ed. John Clive and Thomas Pinney (Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 1972), pp. 232-33. Macaulay also writes in his 'Minute on Indian Education' (1834), 'the career of improvement. And how was this change effected? [...] 'not by calling him "a learned native" when he has mastered all these points of knowledge: but by teaching him those foreign languages in which the greatest mass of information had been laid up, and thus putting all that information within his reach', *Ibid.*, p. 244.

⁵³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

⁵⁴⁰ Walter Crane was designer, design writer, artist and illustrator. He became the head of the Royal College of Art in 1897. Some of his ideas about education and drawing can be described as Ruskinian. See Michael Snodin and John Styles, *Design and the Decorative Arts: Britain 1500-1900* (London V&A Publications, 2001), p. 394.

⁵⁴¹ William Morris designed interior wallpapers, tiles, stained-glass, carpets and tapestries. The Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Co., and from 1875 the Morris and Company manufactured his designs. See *ibid.*, p. 392. Walter Crane was an early associate of the above company. See Andrea Rose, *The Pre-Raphaelitism* (London: Phaidon, 1992), p. 23. William Morris was a prominent public figure promoting the value and joy of craft work and the need for equality of opportunity. See Snodin and Styles, *Design and the Decorative Arts* (2001), p. 392.

of the Arts and Crafts.⁵⁴²

Babits's reference to Morris and Crane illustrates an appreciation of their works. The Scharpingers, for instance, are sober respectable people. They are also realistic patrons of modern Hungarian art. They are a credit to the environment they have created, and their surroundings also characterise their family in a positive way.

Imrus's life when he stays with Döme is compared to that of Robinson. They are not only well behind their time but are also isolated. Imrus is resentful of this sphere. When Imrus is taken back by Döme for the first time, he has lines from *Hamlet* in mind. These occur in connection with his father's grave. Imrus is idealistic, and the odd one out in his old world. This is because he is sensitive and differently cultured. It is typical of him that he admires the works of Ruskin. Ruskin was another key figure of the Arts and Crafts Movement:

His direct appeal to the heart, and his belief in the reforming power of personalised art and hand-craft based on a study of nature influenced people as diverse as William Morris; leaders of the Aesthetic Movement like Edward Godwin and Oscar Wilde, and members of the Arts and Crafts movement into the years after 1900.⁵⁴³

Imrus is also more emotional than many other characters. At a particular phase of the novel, his actions are characterised as being like those of Coriolianus. This is because of his contempt towards Döme and what he represents. Then it becomes proved by events that it is Döme that has the upper hand over him and not the other way round. Imrus and the *Viharágyú* circle mention Wilde because of the belief that nature can be created by art. This, again, shows Imrus, and his university mates' unrealistic idealism.

The *Illustration* and *Illustrated London News* are on the table in a Budapest

⁵⁴²Ibid., p. 420.

⁵⁴³Ibid., p. 387.

hotel where the contributors of *Viharágyú* meet. This context alludes to the exclusivity of French and English literary culture in the Hungarian capital. The publication date of the English magazine, *Illustration*, is later than that of *Halálfiat*.⁵⁴⁴ Because of the clashing dates it is highly likely that Babits is referring to the French *L'Illustration* (13 Rue Saint-Georges Paris).⁵⁴⁵ This magazine was much like the *Illustrated London News* until 1925. It dealt with contemporary politics, arts, health matters, geography and portraits. After 1925 it specialised in arts exclusively.

The Illustrated London News (London)⁵⁴⁶ was a colourful magazine which provided news from all over the world. It dealt with excavations in the lands of ancient civilisations, current politics, geography, insects, sports, hunting, horse-racing, fine arts, health matters, personalities and royal news. Both magazines and the level of culture they represent are in contrast with what *Viharágyú* can achieve. They are also in sharp contrast with Döme's and Cenci's 'narrow-minded' but healthy provinciality.

Towards the end of the novel Imrus compares himself to Paul Verlaine and Wilde. Rosenberg is a friend of Imrus. He gives a lecture on Darwin and Haeckel. Gitta is also part of the *Viharágyú* circle. They all read Spencer. Herbert Spencer was preoccupied with the happiness of the individual in relation to society. His ideas are a root of a principal theme in *Halálfiat*. Spencer writes:

all our social evils and imperfections are due to want of complete adjustment between men and the conditions of social life—are, indeed, nothing more than the

⁵⁴⁴*Illustration: A Quarterly Magazine Devoted to the Craft of Mechanical Reproduction and thereby Dealing with Art and Workmanship in Printing, and Science in Advertising and Commerce*, 2, ed. Gerard T. Meynell (London: Milford lane, n. d.). This periodical appeared only in 1928-29 according to the *British Union-Catalogue of Periodicals*, ed. James D. Stuart, Muriel Hammond, and Erwin Saenger, 4 vols. (London: Butterworths Scientific Publications, 1955-1958), ii (1956), p. 446. (This is interesting because Gyula praises the quality of the print and paper when he picks up these magazines.)

⁵⁴⁵*L'Illustration Journal Universel Hebdomadaire*, dir. René Baschet, 76-85 (1927-1935).

⁵⁴⁶*Illustrated London News*, 152-171 (1918-1927).

contemporary jarring and wrenching of a machine the parts of which are not yet brought into thorough working order as the process of adaptation is still continuing... eventually all friction will entirely disappear.⁵⁴⁷

This really means: 'that no one can be perfectly moral till all are moral; no one can be perfectly happy till all are happy'.⁵⁴⁸

It is typical of Gitta that she admires the works of Ronsard, Chaucer and Meredith. Chaucer and Meredith appeal to a well-educated taste. *The Canterbury Tales* are full of archetypal characters. The stories of this work all contain universal meanings. This is why Chaucer appeals to Gitta who is a clever, self-conscious and self-consistent character. She finds Hungarian literature not only *naïve*, but also irritatingly rhetorical. Gitta speaks foreign languages too. Her attitude to the world is not so much emotional but rational. She and her sister, Noémi, are compared to the daughters of King Lear. Young Mihály Andrejev also falls into this line despite the fact that he is a boy. A posh hotel's 'five-o'clock' suggests an almost imaginary situation in which Imrus finds himself after having spent the night with a prostitute. *Good morning!* is used in a trilingual context. It, again, draws attention to the multicultural background of the novel. The theatrical use of foreign greetings also aims at flattering Imrus who is really cultured. It also disguises their user's dishonest motives.

Mene Tekel Fáresz is a reference to the riddle Belshazzar faces in the Book of Daniel in the Old Testament.⁵⁴⁹ This reference was, however, also applied by Poe. It

⁵⁴⁷For more information on Babits and Herbert Spencer see footnotes 301 and 531. William Henry Hudson, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Herbert Spencer*, 2nd edn. (London: Routledge and Thoemmes, 1996), p. 44.

⁵⁴⁸Herbert Spencer, 2nd edn., *Social Statics*, intr., Michael Taylor (London: Routledge and Thoemmes, 1996), p. 456.

⁵⁴⁹'MENE; God has numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. PERES; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians', Daniel 5. *The Holy Bible* (Cambridge, London, New York: C.U.P., n.d.), p. 1042.

can be found in the *Narrative of A. Gordon Pym*.⁵⁵⁰ Babits's fifth novel also has a root in this work by Poe. Gyula takes up this phrase in *Halálfiái*. His bragging criticism is received coldly by Jozsó.

While the ecclesiastical and medical terms in the novel are frequently Latin, the financial terms are mostly English.⁵⁵¹ This is not only an English characteristic of *Halálfiái*, but also a reference to Anglophilic István Széchenyi's foundation of economics in Hungary. The *Hitel*⁵⁵² by Széchenyi is mentioned in Babits's essays. It is interesting to add that British economics was a most popular subject with the Hungarians from the 1780s on. József Kis, Ferenc Széchenyi and Gergely Berzeviczy studied the works of Adam Smith.⁵⁵³ *Hitel* was a product of Széchenyi's English studies. It contains many English terms and footnotes. Széchenyi started it with a motto from Byron. He utilised the tenets of Adam Smith, Jeremy Bentham and David Ricardo among others. The ideas of capitalism Széchenyi suggested in *Hitel* are shown in the Scharpingers in *Halálfiái*.⁵⁵⁴ It is a fact that even at the date of *Halálfiái* the Scharpingers' banking business was only one illustrative example of successful

⁵⁵⁰ *The Complete Tales and Poems by Edgar Allan Poe*, n. e. (London: Penguin, 1982), p. 868.

⁵⁵¹ See for example *budget* which Babits italicises. *Halálfiái* (1984), p. 60.

⁵⁵² In 'Az irodalom elmélete' (1919), in *Esszék és tanulmányok* (1978), i, p. 569 Babits recalls Arany as the writer of an ode to Széchenyi, 'Előtted a küzdés, előtted a pálya, / Az erőtlén csügged, az erős megállja'; *The field is universal and allows scope to You, / Only the weak will despair, the strong will stand their ground*. Babits mentions here that Széchenyi took his motto of *Hitel*: 'Az erős ellenáll, a gyenge kétségbeesik' from Byron: 'The strong will resist while the weak despair'. See *Gr. Széchenyi István, Hitel A taglalát és a Hitellel foglalkozó kisebb iratok*, ed. Iványi-Grünwald Béla (Budapest: Atheneum, 1930), p. 270 and George Gordon Byron, *Don Juan*, canto I, verse vii.: 'And for the fame you would engross below, / The field is universal and allows / Scope to all such as feel the inherent glow:', *Byron Poetical Works*, ed. Frederick Page and John Jump (London; Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 636. Arany's verse: 'Széchenyi emlékezete', in *Arany János költeményei*, 2 vols. (Budapest: Magyar Helikon, 1967), i, pp. 328-44.

⁵⁵³ Gergely Berzeviczy's *Oeconomia Publico Politica* (1819) was based on Smith's tenets. Ferenc Széchenyi popularised Smith's works in Hungary. See Sándor Fest, *Skóciai Szent Margittól a waleszi bárdokig* (Budapest: Universitas, 2000), p. 369.

⁵⁵⁴ One of the most important suggestions Széchenyi made was the foundations of a National Bank and the enactment of banking laws in Hungary so that people could borrow money, create capital by selling land and could invest their money in industry and infrastructure. See *Gr. Széchenyi István, Hitel A taglalát és a Hitellel foglalkozó kisebb iratok* (1930), pp. 385-88, 420. (The Hirschfelds in *Kárvár* are an example of manufacturers and the Scharpingers in *Halálfiái* of successful bankers.)

budding capitalism in Hungary.

4.4.3 Gothic crime story

The crime episodes in *Halálfiat* have a Gothic⁵⁵⁵ and Byronic feature. These often mingle with folk motifs and anecdotal narration. The most remarkable examples of Babits's affiliation with the English Gothic conventions of writing are: the archetypal figure of the villain, Gyula; the circumstances of murder in the local pub, the elopement to Italy and the swindling episode. One cannot find Gothic novels but only *Jane Eyre* on Babits's (incomplete) library list, however. As I have mentioned earlier, these features do not exist in books such as *Buddenbrooks*. As opposed to this type of fiction: 'Many Gothic novels reproduce the portrait of unrestraint as a quality especially characteristic of southern Europe, of Italy, or even particular parts of Italy, which is regularly found in eighteenth-century travel writings'.⁵⁵⁶ Following this convention, Babits's also places the scenes of extravagantly licentious living in Italy. Gyula's main characteristic of the Gothic villain is that he does not only appeal to the irrational in Nelli but also seduces her. Nelli would be 'an angel' meaning 'pure' only if she had not been misled by Gyula: 'The victims of Gothic fiction are frequently presented, weak, collapsing, or in chains, as emblems of oppression, and attention is focused particularly on the body of the heroine, who always assumes the role of the main victim of "vice and violence"'.⁵⁵⁷ This description suits Nelli perfectly. The innocent reverence of nature which is another Gothic feature can be seen in the

⁵⁵⁵Originally Gothic was a disparaging term meaning barbarous, medieval. In the 18th century it meant barbarous, medieval, supernatural. Devendra P. Vandra, *The Gothic Flame' Being a History of the Gothic Novel in England; its origins, efflorescence, disintegration and residuary influences* (London: Metuchen; N. J.: Scarecrow, 1987), p. 12.

⁵⁵⁶Chloe Chard, 'Introduction' to Ann Radcliffe, *The Romance of the Forest* (Oxford and New York: O. U. P., 1999), p. xiii.

⁵⁵⁷Ibid., p. xvii.

character of Cenci.⁵⁵⁸ Cenci is also the embodiment of unquestionable virtue and integrity. Her character is an example of honest innocence which is in sharp contrast with those of many others. The innocent poet and his self-alleged murderer, the uncontrollable villain Gyula, is another example of this contrast. This opposition of sinfulness and utter virtue has its roots in the Gothic tradition.

4.4.4 Features of the Eighteenth-century English novel of adventure

Some of my statements above have already pointed towards the genetic link *Halálfiat* has with eighteenth-century fiction. *Halálfiat* transforms and creates partly a hypertext and partly an architext of eighteenth-century English novels. Babits's hypertextual transposition of the eighteenth-century novel is most explicitly manifested in the allegorised or often personified moral concepts used in metaphors and similes.

Babits read *The Vicar of Wakefield* at home when young.⁵⁵⁹ Hungarian literature had strong roots in Goldsmith even before Babits.⁵⁶⁰ Babits got to know his works also through his Hungarian precursors.⁵⁶¹ *The Vicar of Wakefield* is an example of a story with a moral to it. The heading of chapter XXVIII. is: 'Happiness and Misery rather the result of Prudence than of Virtue in this life; temporal evils and

⁵⁵⁸ A characteristic of Gothic literature is that it contains characters of sombre diabolical villainy, such as Lovelace, and pure angelic virtue, such as Clarissa and Pamela. Ibid., pp. 19, 35. It brings to mind religion and superstition and chivalry as well as a reverence of nature which is often connected with a tale of terror, such as in *The Castle of Otranto*. See Devendra P. Vandra, 'The Gothic Flame' (1987), pp. 12, 38. "The impulses of fear, which is most violent and interesting of all the passions remain longer than any other upon the memory", ibid., p. 39. The elopement to Italy is a feature of the Gothic novel, such as, one can read it in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*.

⁵⁵⁹ Babits, *Az európai irodalom története* (1979), p. 218.

⁵⁶⁰ *The Vicar of Wakefield* was part of the English university curriculum, and was immensely popular in Hungary in the 1830s. See Fest, *Skóciai Szent Margittól a waleszi bárdokig* (2000), p. 395.

⁵⁶¹ János Arany used *The Traveller* (1764) and *The Deserted Village* (1770) and most likely *The Vicar of Wakefield* in his works. Ibid., 369.

felicities being regarded by Heaven as things merely in themselves trifling, and unworthy its care in the distribution'.⁵⁶² This most likely could have been one hypotext of Babits's frequent moral allegorising in *Halálfiái*.

Babits's architextual use of his English models is most explicitly manifested in the structural skeleton of certain episodes in *Halálfiái* which follow the model of eighteenth-century novels. These particular episodic subtexts are the descriptions of adventures which entail travelling with companions or family. The spa is one special destination in this case. I will illustrate this phenomenon of architectural utilisation more closely in my detailed analysis of the story-line.

Going on retreat to a spa is a leitmotif in *Buddenbrooks* as well. The travelling here, however, is neither detailed nor adventurous. Going to the spa is only a fact which is part of the order of life. This is what makes it different from Babits's work and from Babits's English root material. Babits writes:

Döme ezalatt Harkányban várta Cencit, aki a jövő hét valamely napjára jelezte érkezését; s csakugyan egy délután kocsi fordult be a primitív *kurhaus* elé, ahol már a délutáni muzsika szólt; a kocsi széles sárnyomokat hagyott a kavicsokon, s Döme messziről látta—mert épp sétáját tette a "parkban" [...] Az idő rosszra fordult, s Döme örült az ürügynek, hogy hazamehet. Kocsin ment, noha Sót és Harkány között járt már a vicinális.⁵⁶³

This is why the hypotextual role of Fielding's *Tom Jones*⁵⁶⁴ and especially Smollett's *The Expedition of Humphrey Clinker* is more relevant in Babits's text than that of the German novel. Their works as a model show not only in the figure of

⁵⁶²Ibid., p. xv.

⁵⁶³'Meanwhile Döme expected Cenci in Harkány. Cenci promised to arrive any day the following week. She arrived one afternoon, indeed. Her cart stopped in front of the old-fashioned *kurhaus* where afternoon music was played already. The cart left wide strips of mud on the pebbles and Döme was able to see these—because he happened to be taking his afternoon walk in the "park" just then [...] The weather turned cold and Döme was pleased to have an excuse to go home. He travelled by cart despite the fact that there was a train link between Sót and Harkány', *Halálfiái* (1984), pp. 233-34.

⁵⁶⁴A scene of chance encounters while travelling can be found, Henry Fielding, *The History of Tom Jones, A Foundling* (1997), pp. 539-40.

Döme, but also in passages such as the one cited above. An example from the latter source:

I find that the Roman baths in this quarter, were found covered by an old burying ground belonging to the Abbey; through which, in all probability the water drains its passage: so that as we drink the decoction of living bodies at the Pump-room, we swallow the strainings of rotten bones and carcasses at the private bath.⁵⁶⁵

Döme's and Cenci's travelling backwards and forwards between the provincial town, Sót, and the spa, Harkány, also recalls Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield* again:

It was about the beginning of autumn, on a holiday—for I kept such as intervals of relaxation from labour—that I had drawn out my family to our usual place of amusement, and our young musicians began their usual concert.⁵⁶⁶

It is worth mentioning that Meredith's *Evan Harrington* is likewise a novel of adventure; full of meaningful comings and goings between the homes of the different characters. It was modelled primarily on *Tom Jones*,⁵⁶⁷ and is certainly another source of Babits's novel.

4.4.5 Meredith

Meredith as a principal source of this work is obvious to those who know the English novelist. Babits admired Meredith.⁵⁶⁸ The keen interest Babits's *Halálfiái* shows in

⁵⁶⁵Tobias Smollett, *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* (1991), p. 46.

⁵⁶⁶Oliver Goldsmith, *The Vicar of Wakefield* (London; New York; Toronto: Dent, 1917), p. 23.

⁵⁶⁷Barbara Hardy's introduction to George Meredith, *Evan Harrington* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1983), p. vi.

⁵⁶⁸Babits translated *The Egoist* while writing *Halálfiái* and wrote an essay, 'Meredith', on the occasion of Meredith's death (1909). This essay demonstrates his knowledge of the works of the English writer. In it Babits calls Meredith an optimist who is not even aware of his optimism, because of his unity with Nature and love of Nature: 'Éljetek, ahogy a Föld tanít, és eszetekbe se jut sem optimizmus, sem pesszimizmus'; 'Live as the Earth teaches you to live, and do not think of either optimism or pessimism', *Esszék és tanulmányok* (1978), i, p. 101. Babits also sees Meredith as a writer in whose works there is no "dissociation of sensibility" and who understood the benevolence of humour. Babits regards Meredith as the most realistic of educators. He considers H. G. Wells, whose works are the main source of inspiration of his next novel, to be Meredith's equal in his staunch belief in education: 'Senki nem vetette jobban szemére egy nemzetnek kötelességeit gyermekei iránt, kimondva, hogy *mindennél fontosabb* a jövő nemzedék dolga. Meredith költészete (az élet e hú másolata) pompás bizonyítéka Wells gondolatainak'; 'No one had viewed the obligations of a nation towards its children more

society is akin to Meredith's novels. This is true despite the fact that Babits's work is much more pessimistic than the optimistic social philosophy which is manifest in many of Meredith's works. Should one fail to recognise Meredith as a principal source of *Halálfiái*, Babits's use of intertext: *Imp of the perverse*, as I quote it here,⁵⁶⁹ will indicate Meredith's role in inspiring the composition of this novel.⁵⁷⁰ The description of outdoor adventures in *The Egoist* undoubtedly inspired Babits in his description of the two families outing to the lake.⁵⁷¹ Babits's hypertextual transposition of Meredith's *The Egoist* is explicit in the theme, diction and wording of the character's bathing in the lake:

A fürdő alakok megint fölmerültek a gyepszélen, versenyt futva és nedves törölközőikkel csapdosva. Valaki köszöntötte őket. Ügető paták zaja Clara figyelmét a fasorra vonta. Willoughby látta a park pázsitján átvágni s egy szót ejtve Vernon felé, továbblovagolni. Akkor ő is előjött, hogy lássák. [...] Crossjay nagyot rikkantott örömeiben. Willoughby megfordította fejét, de nem lova fejét. A fiú eleibe szaladt Clarának. Keresztül úszta már a tavat oda-vissza; versenytfutott Mr. Whithforddal—s legyőzte! Mennyire szerette volna, ha Miss Middleton is ott lett volna! [...] Clara irigykedve hallgatta őt. Ez volt a gondolata: "Mi nők oda vagyunk szögezve nemünkhöz!"⁵⁷²

thoroughly, and stated that the future generation is *above everything* in importance. Meredith's poetry (this faithful copy of life) is splendid evidence of H. G. Wells's thoughts', See *Esszék és Tanulmányok* (1978), i, pp. 107.

⁵⁶⁹ *Halálfiái* (1984), p. 454.

⁵⁷⁰ Imps have their freakish wickedness in them to kindle detective vision: malignly do they love to uncover ridiculousness in imposing figures. Wherever they catch sight of Egoism they pitch their camps, they circle and squat, and forthwith trim their lanterns, confident of the ludicrous to come', George Meredith, *The Egoist* (London; Sydney; Toronto: The Bodley Head, 1972), pp. 7-8.

⁵⁷¹ Babits translated three chapters of *The Egoist*: 'An Aged and Great Wine', 'Híres bor, vén bor'; 'Clara's Meditations', Clara elmélkedései' and 'Shows the Divining Arts of a Perceptive Mind', 'mely egy fogékony elme kitaláló művészetét mutatja'. He cooperated with Árpád Tóth who translated the remaining chapters of the novel. Their joint translation of *The Egoist* was published in two volumes in Budapest in 1921. (Mária Stauder-Katalin Varga, *Babits Mihály bibliográfiája* (1998), p. 154. Though the chapters Babits translated do not include the train scene they include the chapter on vine and wine containing references to Horace and Pindar. The vineyard and wine and are central motifs in *Halálfiái*. A reference to Horace is in *Halálfiái* (1984), p. 250. The lake scene in the *Egoist* is also comparable to the one in *Halálfiái*. The many metaphorical descriptions that Babits uses similarly to Meredith are obvious in the descriptive scenes. Chapters XX-XXI are close to the train scene which Babits surely knew. More about the background of this scene can be read in John Goode, 'The Egoist: Anatomy or Striptease', in Ian Fletcher, *Meredith Now: Some Critical Essays* (London: Routledge; Kegan Paul, 1971), and in Gillian Beer, *A Change of Masks* (London: Athlone, 1970).

⁵⁷² George Meredith, *Az Egoista* (1921), i, p. 308.

The bathers reappeared on the grass-ridge, racing and flapping wet towels. Someone hailed them. A sound of galloping hooves drew her attention to the avenue. She saw Willoughby dash across the park-level, and dropping a word to Vernon, ride away. Then she allowed herself to be seen. [...] Crossjay shouted. Willoughby turned his head, but not his horse's head. The boy sprang up to Clara. He had swum across the lake and back; he had raced Mr Whitford—and beaten him! How he wished Miss Middleton had been able to be one of them! [...] Clara listened to him enviously. Her thought was: We women are nailed to our sex!⁵⁷³

A fürdéstől távol volt minden pikantéria, mert abban az időben a hölgyek még rendkívül illedelmes fürdőkosztümöt viseltek. [...] A kislányok nagy sikongást csaptak vékony hangjukon; egyszer pedig a kis Noémi kicsúszott az apja karjaiból, és nagy kiáltással lemerült a vízbe. [...] Aztán maga úszott be a vízbe, mutatni, hogy ahol ő van, nincs ok félelemre: egy ugrással messze lódult el a parttól, szép, barna, férfias tagjait mutogatva, kivette néha karját vagy combját a fölhabzó vízből, aztán bemártva ismét fél arcát és sörényét, belesimuló mozdulattal, s előre, előre lüktetve a puha vízen, egészen a túlsó partig,⁵⁷⁴

Bathing involved no indiscretion in those days since women wore discreet bathing-suits in those days. [...] The little girls yelled in their thin voice. Little Noémi happened to slip out of her father's arms and ducked under the water with a loud cry. [...] Then he swam into the water showing that there was no reason to fear where he was. He took a jump from the bank displaying his attractive, brown and manly limbs: showing sometimes his arms, sometimes his thighs over the foams of the water. He slid one side of his face and his mane forward and even further forward into the water; palpitating in the soft water right to the opposite bank.⁵⁷⁵

The semantic transpositions here are the decency tied to the female sex and the unbridled pleasure coupled with physical activity. From the point of view of wording, one must draw attention to the expression of pleasure the characters find in bathing. These include metaphors of movement. A relevant illustration of Babits's conscious or sub-conscious utilisation of *The Egoist* is the use of 'mane'. Since the characters do not ride in *Halálfiái* the application of mane for hair is a metaphor and metonymy of the missing horse one finds described in *The Egoist*. The movement of Gyula's head also corresponds to Willoughby's.

Moralising, personified abstract nouns and the description of emotions with

⁵⁷³George Meredith, *The Egoist* (London; Sydney; Toronto: The Bodley Head, 1972), p. 169.

⁵⁷⁴*Halálfiái* (1984), pp. 102-03.

⁵⁷⁵My translation of the previous quotation.

metaphors of nature are further characteristics of *The Egoist*. These can all be traced in Babits's writing. 'Clara's Meditations' is a hypotext Babits explicitly drew on:

A leány lázban volt, mint egy kődarab feküdt, de égő velővel. Gyors lelkek rohannak; s benn vannak már a szerencsétlenségben, hacsak árnyéka rájuk esik. Az aggály iszonyata hajtja őket. [...] Egy szemöldök rántás vihart jelent, szellő hajótörést; tüzet látni annyi már, mint égni. Ha az utálat közelgése az, amitől rettegnék, egy lehelettől átszenvedik az ölelés tragédiáját; s aztán: kész a küzdelem köztük s az undor közt; köztük s a bűn közt, mely segítséget ígér; köztük s a gyengeség közt, mely a bűnhöz fordul; köztük s jobb részük közt, mely nem sug illuziót.⁵⁷⁶

She was in a fever, lying like stone, with her brain burning. Quick natures run out to calamity in any little shadow of it flung before. Terrors of apprehension drive them. [...] A frown means tempest, a wind wreck; to see fire is to be seized by it. When it is the approach of their loathing that they fear, they are in the tragedy of the embrace at a breath; and then is the wrestle between themselves and horror; between themselves and evil, which promises aid; themselves and the better part of them, which whispers no beguilement.⁵⁷⁷

Babits's rewording of this passage:

Szemében "vad tűz égett"; s mintegy "véres titok": mely nagy jogot ad, s mindent követelhet. Nellinél a Félenkség cinkosa lett a Botránynak: nem tudott ellentállni a szerelem bejelentett és hangos keresete előtt. A bűn talán éppen annyira származik gyávaságból, mint vakmerőségből.⁵⁷⁸

"Wild fire burnt" in his eyes nearly like a "bloody secret" which empowers one and can demand anything. Fearsomeness became the accomplice of Scandal with Nelli. She could not resist the loudly submitted plea of love. The origin of sin is as much cowardice as fool-hardiness.⁵⁷⁹

The thematic borrowing is obvious again: love brings about fever. From the point of view of tropes, one must notice the use of fire and stone; wildness and burning in the metaphors which express emotional states. *Halálfiái* definitely draws on *The Egoist* in the application of these. The connection Babits makes between cowardice, fearsomeness and sin in matters of the heart has its genetic roots in *The Egoist* too.

It was Tóth not Babits that translated the storm passage in *The Egoist*. Babits's

⁵⁷⁶ George Meredith, *Az egoista* (1921), i, p. 297.

⁵⁷⁷ George Meredith, *The Egoist* (1972), p. 162.

⁵⁷⁸ *Halálfiái* (1984), p. 131.

⁵⁷⁹ My translation of the previous quotation.

depiction of a downpour at a state of crisis in *Halálfiái*, however, copies the theme of the storm, and is a hypertext of this scene in *The Egoist*. One can see the source of all Babits's stylistic devices in Meredith's scene. A telling contrast is that while the central Biblical motif in Babits is the deluge from the Old Testament, the similar key motif in Meredith is connected with the swine of the New Testament: ⁵⁸⁰

Rain was universal; a thick robe of it swept from hill to hill; thunder rumbled remote, and between the ruffled roars the downpour pressed on the land with a great noise of eager gobbling, much like that of the swine's trough fresh filled, as though a vast assembly of the hungered had seated themselves clamorously and fallen to on meats and drinks in a silence, save of chaps. ⁵⁸¹

Az ég hangos csattanással felelt a káromlásra. Imruska félve borult anyja nyakába, s Nelli ijedt és vad szenvedéllyel szorította magához fiacskáját. S ebben a pillanatban leszakadt a zápor, oly rettenetes erővel és hirtelenséggel, mint a zuhanó kövek—mint iszonyú, mennyei tűk, ezer kis hegyes tölcser az asztalokon, új özönvíz! És mire a csárda viskójáig szaladtak, öt lépést, csuromvíz lett minden ruhájuk. ⁵⁸²

The sky replied with a loud crash to the curse. Little Imrus leant on his mother's neck apprehensively. Nelli embraced her son with frightened and violent passion. At this moment shower began to pour down with such tremendous abruptness and force that made it like plummeting stones; terrible heavenly pins; a thousand small pointed funnels on the tables: a new deluge! And by the time they had run the five steps up to the hut of the inn all their clothes were soaking wet. ⁵⁸³

⁵⁸⁰Mat. 7. 6. and Luke 15. 15.

⁵⁸¹George Meredith, *The Egoist* (1972), p. 213.

⁵⁸²The sky replied to the curse with a loud bang. Imruska embraced his mother worriedly and Nelli pulled him tight against herself in a frightened and passionate manner. At this very moment the sky came down with such tremendous force and abruptness that it was like plummeting stones—like terrible heavenly needles and a thousand pointed cones on the tables, a new deluge. And by the time they had run five steps to a hut of an inn, they were soaked to the skin. The inn was crammed. It consisted of one dark room which only had a small window. The air stunk because of the soaking wet clothes. Nelli was on the verge of fainting first because of the stench', *Halálfiái* (1984), p. 114.

⁵⁸³My translation of the previous quotation.

4.5 Halálfiái's story-line and its English sources

The *pater familias* dies in the middle of the vintage. The description of his death has a negative aura. It prepares the reader for a story that contains sad episodes:

Nem a vidám, nótás szüret volt ez, hanem a bús szüret. Nem a hegyről megnyíltott végtelen láthatár, hanem csak a ködös udvarú, üvegburás gyertyának fényköre, öngyilkos lepkék légióival: ősz és kora esték, kártya és kába bor. Nem nők s fiatalok, csak henye férfiak, zord politizálók: az elkeseredett magyarság csücsült fel a hegyre, strázsálni, míg a jövő mámorok leve forr.

Ilyen volt a Rácz Józsi halálos szürete.⁵⁸⁴

Evan Harrington is a similarly autobiographical novel by Meredith as *Halálfiái* by Babits. It served as one of Babits's models. Despite its beginning, the end of this English novel is much more cheerful than Babits's. It begins with the death of the *pater familias* who is the representative of a class. He leaves four children and a wife behind, just like Józsi Rácz in *Halálfiái*:

Long after the hours when tradesmen are in the habit of commencing business, the shutters of a certain shop in the town of Lympport-on-the-Sea remained significantly closed, and it became known that death had taken Mr. Melchisedec Harrington, and struck one off the list of living tailors.⁵⁸⁵

After the death of her husband in *Halálfiái* Cenci takes on the responsibility for the family and its land. One of her daughters, Nelli marries Miska. They settle down in Sót where Miska starts his career. The birth of their son, Imrus, parallels the death of Döme's son, Ákos. Gyula and Erzsi are Miska's and Nelli's neighbours in Sót. They have two daughters, Gitta and Noémi. Gyula and Erzsi lead a life of ostentatious entertainment. The young poet, Laci Kovács, is introduced when he is on his way to Gyula's and Erzsi's party one afternoon. The children in the

⁵⁸⁴This was not a merry tuneful vintage but a sad one. It was not the infinite vista opening up from the hill but only the misty courtyard of the circular light shining through the glass candle shade with legions of suicidal butterflies: Autumn and early nights, cards and heavy wine. It was not women and youth but only idle men talking politics morosely: the desolate Hungarians sat up on the hill keeping watch while the liquid of future inebriation was fermenting. Such was the deathly vintage of Józsi Rácz', *Halálfiái* (1984), p. 5.

⁵⁸⁵George Meredith, *Evan Harrington* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1886), p. 1.

neighbourhood play a trick on the passers by. They put a purse on the road as if someone had lost it. The minute anyone wants to pick it up they will pull it away with a string. The poor poet becomes the butt of their humour. This episode serves as an excuse to discuss the moral nature of man. It is an imitation of the classical fabliaux.⁵⁸⁶

Gyula's party leads to the first main complication in the story-line. The young poet admires Nelli. Gyula boasts of loving Nelli, which makes the poet feel even more humiliated. Miska disapproves of the debauchery. He, nevertheless, attends the entertainment despite his resentment. Döme stays away to show his disapproval. The same night the young poet goes to eat out in the local pub. He becomes involved in gambling. Unlike baron Wintersberg Gida he has no money. Gida, who is drunk, throws his purse at him. He tells the poet to keep it. On his way home Laci is murdered. After the 'bloody' event Gyula claims to be the murderer. This is an episode on innocence and vice which I referred to earlier, in connection with *Halálfiat*'s roots in the Gothic novel. Gyula resembles Rochester in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. Rochester is in league with the devil, as well. The destructive side of Rochester is more profound than that of Gyula. The origin of Gyula's badness is his confirmed pride and restlessness. They resemble one another in their demonic behaviour and appearance.⁵⁸⁷ This highly contrasted moral opposition culminating in crime does not exist in *Buddenbrooks*.

Apart from its Gothic roots, the description of the night entertainment is also a hypertext of Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Its characters, the debauched

⁵⁸⁶ Aesop; Phaedrus; Horace; Avianus wrote fables about human nature with an instructive purpose. See La Fontaine, *Selected Fables*, ed. Cécile Hugon (Oxford: Clarendon, 1923), pp. 129-73. *Fables of La Fontaine*, trans. Walter Thornbury (Hertfordshire: Omega, 1984), p. 10. Other La Fontaine fables about human nature concerning want and greed: 'The Miser who lost his treasure', *ibid.*, p. 132, 'The hen with the golden eggs', *ibid.*, p. 162, 'The man who runs after fortune, and the man who waits her', *ibid.*, p. 237, 'Not too much', *ibid.*, p. 335, 'The miser and his friend' *ibid.*, p. 367. It also resembles and imitates La Fontaine's fabliaux such as 'Le Trésor et les deux homes', *ibid.*, pp. 102-03.

⁵⁸⁷ R. E. Hughes compares the character of Rochester to that of Dionysos, because of his sensuality, eroticism and refusal of Apollonian self-knowledge. See R. E. Hughes, 'Jane Eyre: The Unbaptized Dionysos', in *The Brontë Sisters: Critical Assessments*, ed. Eleanor McNeese, 4 vols. (East Sussex: Helm, 1996), iii, p. 123.

aristocrat, Gida; the self-alleged murderer, Gyula, and the innocent victim, Laci have their origins in Wilde too.⁵⁸⁸ Gyula resembles not only Rochester, but also Henry and Dorian Gray from the point of view of the harm he causes:

Laci egyszerre falakat érzett a helyzet és mondanivalója közt, és fájoan beléjük ütközött. Lehetetlen volt beszélni, s mindaz, ami a levegő elektromosságából összegyűlt bortól meglágyult lelkében, könnyé és szakadozott szavakká zuhant szét, bár a báró borosan és el-elfúlva bizonyította:⁵⁸⁹

A hypotext extract from *The Picture of Dorian Gray*:

The public-houses were just closing, and dim men and women were clustering in broken groups round their doors. From some of the bars came the sound of horrible laughter. In others, drunkards brawled and screamed.⁵⁹⁰

The day after Laci Kovács's murder, Nelli is at home making jam. Erzsi goes to see her. Erzsi's dramatic outbursts of jealousy disrupt the peace of Nelli's household. She theatrically offers Gyula to Nelli and hysterically sulks. Gyula wants Nelli. He claims her from Miska in the name of love and happiness. He proposes an outing. Miska is too weak to say no. The older generation, Döme and Cenci, views the neglect of the children with disapproval. This is a colourful subtext. It is also unlike anything in *Buddenbrooks*. Its roots are much closer to the bragging immorality of Gothic fiction and Wilde. Like in the Gothic trend, flaunted vice draws attention to the necessity of innocence in the case of *Halálfiái*.

The two families' outing is disrupted by the storm. This marks the first crisis of the novel. It can only be compared with Clara Middleton's escape from Patterne Hall in *The Egoist*. As I demonstrated in my section on Babits's roots in Meredith,⁵⁹¹ the wording which describes the weather expresses the heroines' emotions.

⁵⁸⁸See *Halálfiái* (1984), pp. 71-77 and Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1985), pp. 202-10.

⁵⁸⁹Laci suddenly realised the wall between the situation and what he wanted to say and he felt it impossible to overcome. He was unable to speak for pain. Everything that his inebriated heart absorbed from the electricity of the atmosphere became tears and debris of torn words. The baron, however, drunk and gasping, continued to brag', *Halálfiái* (1984), pp. 74-75.

⁵⁹⁰Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1985), p. 202.

⁵⁹¹See footnotes 580-83.

It pours with rain. After being stuck in a tiny, dark, stinking inn with one window, everyone sets out on foot to catch the train back home in *Halálfiái*. Nelli is driven by all the wrong emotions such as blind hate towards her husband. She knows that her husband is morally superior to her. She feels guilty but this will not stop her. She is thoughtlessly revengeful towards him. She goes with Gyula:

Nelli, aki Miska karjainak nyugodt keménységéhez szokott, különös lüktetéssel érzett maga mellett egy idegesebb és bizonytalanabb elementumot.
S ment a sötétben sorsa felé.⁵⁹²

In spite of the fact that she feels little inclination to do so, Nelli gets onto the wrong train with Gyula. Then they get off this train at a wrong station where they meet someone from Sót. He reminds Nelli of home. Nelli is too weak to turn back. Even her attachment to her son fails to halt her inadvertent flight. She goes to Italy with Gyula. Her head is full of foggy ideas of love. These have their origins in the French novels Erzsi told her about in Sót.

Earlier on, I quoted Clara's flight which is principally the origin of Nelli's.

The motif of the heroine's flight is also central to *Tom Jones*:

When, therefore, she came to the place of appointment, and instead of meeting her maid, as was agreed, saw a man riding directly up to her, she neither screamed, nor fainted away; [...] Having thus traced our heroine very particularly back from her departure till her arrival at Upton, we shall in a very few words bring her father to the same place.⁵⁹³

Just as in *The Egoist*, one must observe the innocence of the flight in *Tom Jones*. Sophia is rescued, and remains completely unharmed. Both these flights are in sharp contrast with the poignant awfulness of Nelli's. The hypertextual transposition of these sources by Babits aims to draw attention to the different outcome of the flight

⁵⁹²'Nelli who has been used to Miska's calm and steady arm felt next to herself the closeness of a more anxious and unsteady element in a palpitating way. Then she proceeded towards her destiny in the darkness', Babits, *Halálfiái* (1984), p. 118.

⁵⁹³Henry Fielding, *The History of Tom Jones, A Foundling* (1997), pp. 472-77.

in *Halálfiat*.

The reason for the different consequences of the flight in *Halálfiat* is the negative conduct of many characters which make up society. Gyula is a criminal. Nelli is without common sense and is easily misled. In *The Egoist* Vernon Whitford is well-meaning. Clara is obstinate, but even her feigned attempt to run away is a declaration of her strength of character. She also listens to advice in the end. Whereas society is ineffective in *Halálfiat*, it is supportive of good behaviour in *The Egoist* and in *Tom Jones*.

Another connection Babits has with his English precursors is his use of gossip, letters, and news in the depiction of how society functions.⁵⁹⁴ As in George Eliot's novels—not only in *Middlemarch* but also in *The Mill on the Floss*⁵⁹⁵ and especially in *Silas Marner*⁵⁹⁶—the function of gossip and news is to determine the action of characters.

Eventually Miska, Erzsi, Gitta, Noémi, and Imrus arrive in Sót while Gyula and Nelli arrive in Venice. The Venetian adventure is another truly colourful episode. It is much closer to its English Gothic roots and Wilde than to *Buddenbrooks*. It is Gyula's and Nelli's honeymoon. Its settings also have a root in Ruskin's depictions of

⁵⁹⁴See Gillian Beer, 'Circulatory Systems: Money, Gossip, and Blood in Middlemarch', in *Arguing with the Past: Essays in Narrative from Woolf to Sidney* (London: Routledge, 1989).

⁵⁹⁵A description of this feature which is characteristic of the entire novel: 'It was a time when ignorance was much more comfortable than at present, and was received with all the honours in good society, without being obliged to dress itself in the elaborate costume of knowledge: a time when cheap periodicals were not, and when country surgeons never thought of asking their female patients if they were fond of reading, but simply took it for granted that they preferred gossip', George Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1995), pp. 185-86.

⁵⁹⁶An example from *Silas Marner* whose story originates in gossip based on bad judgment and then on further gossip which are contrasted with real characteristics and events on the one hand and interpreted by other people on the other. 'But while opinion concerning him remained stationary, and his daily habits presented scarcely any visible change', George Eliot, *Silas Marner* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1996), p. 9. 'The repulsion Marner had always created in his neighbours was partly dissipated by the new light in which this misfortune had shown him. [...] He was generally spoken of as a 'poor mused cretur', *ibid.*, 76-77.

Venice.⁵⁹⁷ Gyula and Nelli meet one of the young Scharpingers here. Gyula wants to borrow money from him. He is sensible enough not to give him any. Gyula forces Nelli to live well beyond their means. He gets them into debt. The awesome description of Gyula which I have already illustrated, evokes Gothic conventions. His dishonest extrovert behaviour also copies Wilde's style:

'Live! Live the wonderful life that is in you! Let nothing be lost upon you. Be always searching for new sensations. Be afraid of nothing ... A new Hedonism—that is what our century wants'.⁵⁹⁸

Nelli neither enjoys nor is impressed with night-life. She is just as weak a character as Sybil or Hetty in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. All these three 'heroines' can be seen as variations of Ophelia in *Hamlet*. Nelli soon becomes pregnant, and returns to Gáboros as the mother of Gyula's son, Dodó. Her return home is enforced by Döme's letter as she does not seem to have the moral strength to make decisions or to act.

While Nelli's and Gyula's disastrous 'honeymoon' is being detailed, the other characters get on with their everyday lives in Sót and Gáboros. Erzsi adopts a new role of the deserted woman. She starts studying to become an independent teacher. She is determined to show the world how well off she is on her own. Erzsi's character has its roots in Meredith's ideal of enlightened women.⁵⁹⁹ One must add here that

⁵⁹⁷See footnotes 142 and 143.

⁵⁹⁸Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1985), p. 28.

⁵⁹⁹See Mihály Babits, 'George Meredith' (1909), in *Esszék és tanulmányok*, (1978), i, pp. 108-09. Meredith writes in his letters: 'but when women of our easier classes descend among the poor to interest and lift them, they do more than Radicals for winning heaven's blessing on otherwise unrighteous order of things. Would that there were more of you!', 'George Meredith's letter to Miss Foster (Box Hill, Dorking November 1, 1889), in *Selected Letters of George Meredith*, ed. Mohammad Shaheen (London: Macmillan; New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), p. 109. Meredith's views on the liberation of women were anticipated by Mary Shelley's mother Mary Wollstonecraft (Godwin): 'I come round to my old argument; if woman be allowed to have an immortal soul, she must have, as the employment of

Babits admired Meredith's enlightened attitude to women. In contrast to Meredith's contemporary English literature,⁶⁰⁰ the presentation of an ambitious independent-minded and educated woman was fairly unusual in the Hungarian literature of Babits's time. The teacher in Margit Kaffka's *Mária évei* (1912), Mária Laszlovszky, is an independent-minded educated woman but her life remains unfruitful. She finally commits suicide. The heroine of *Állomások* (1914), Éva Rosztoky, becomes independent and survives, but is neither ambitious nor successful. She is, however, happy and finds contentedness in art. György Bodnár rightly deems that Margit Kaffka wants to show a new phenomenon in these female characters. They have given up their domestic role but cannot become independent professionals yet. They symbolise a state of crisis in the development of society.⁶⁰¹

Miska remains faithful to himself. He makes sure that he gives Nelli a divorce so that she should be able to marry Gyula. He looks after his son. He teaches him and takes him for walks. He also brings his old law books down from the attic and dedicates himself entirely to his work. He catches a cold and dies of pneumonia. Cenci leaves the care of his son to Döme. By this stage of the novel Cenci is the only totally reliable member of the family.

Cenci buys Döme's share of the vineyard. She is in full command. She works

life, an understanding to improve', Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Man; A Vindication of the Rights of Woman; An Historical and Moral View of the French Revolution* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 133.

⁶⁰⁰Consider especially Anthony Trollope's and the attitudes of John Stuart Mill. In Phineas Finn for example 'The aristocrat Laura, the heiress Violet and the adventuress Madame Max are all in their ways seeking liberties, human rights some might say, normally denied their sex. Laura wants to 'meddle with politics' [...] Violet to be free of the marriage-market [...] Madame Max to make a place for herself in the male-dominated and traditionally exclusive "upper ten thousand" [...] we are reminded of Mill's *Subjection of Women* and the ideal of feminine independence it holds out', Anthony Trollope, *Phineas Finn* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), p. 24.

⁶⁰¹György Bodnár, 'Kaffka Margit regényei', in *Kaffka Margit regényei* (Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1968), p. 6.

incessantly and travels between Gádoros and Sót in order to take care of the family. Others also travel. Imrus, Döme, Gitta, Noémi and Erzsi travel between Sót and Gádoros. Döme and Cenci go to the spa in Harkány for recreation. This is an important feature since it architextually links *Halálfiái* to the novel of adventure. It has its roots in the already detailed hypotexts of Meredith,⁶⁰² Fielding, Goldsmith, Sterne and Smollett.⁶⁰³

Nelli's return to Gádoros is taken for granted. She gets back depressed. Not even Imrus's occasional holiday visits to Gádoros can restore her to her old self. Döme also returns to Gádoros briefly. The whole family convenes in Gádoros before they set off again in different directions. Imrus, Nelli, Jolán, Dodó, Gitta, Noémi, Erzsi, and Cenci all meet up here. Nelli and Jolán remain in the background. Noémi and Imrus conduct a youthful love affair. Noémi has little interest in scholarship. Gitta, however, is a genuine scholar. She is well-read in many subjects. She even puts Imrus to shame by speaking foreign languages well. Cenci takes financial responsibility for Imrus so that he can go to study in Budapest. Imrus's main preoccupation at this stage is English, German, and French. The narrator also mentions Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. His dreams about becoming a poet are mostly inspired by László Kovács's verse.

This structure shows Fielding's *Tom Jones* as one of *Halálfiái*'s architextual sources. It is typical of Fielding's novel that the characters purposefully travel in order to encounter each other at certain places where their future destinies are decided. In

⁶⁰²The description of travels also has a prominent role in Meredith's novels. *The Adventures of Harry Richmond* and *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* consist of many travels. Babits had both of these novels in his library. (*The Adventures of Harry Richmond* (London, n. d.), *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1875). *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* has a negative ending. *Harry Richmond*, however, ends happily and therefore resembles *The Egoist*.

⁶⁰³See footnotes 513-15, 559-61, 564-66.

Fielding the state of affairs do change at these encounters. The problem *Halálfiat* shows up is that while the travels of the characters in the English novels are usually effective towards a good end, they are often ineffective in *Halálfiat*. One must, however, notice that the travels of the old generation are an exception here, since Döme and Cenci often save nearly-lost causes.

In respect of successfully ending episodes, *Halálfiat* is more comparable to the world of *The Mill on the Floss*⁶⁰⁴ and to that of *Middlemarch* than to the more cheerful world of eighteenth-century novels of adventure. Departures, leave-takings, encounters and journeying are main features in *Middlemarch* and in *The Mill on the Floss*. The settings of these novels remain mostly the same provincial society all through. The personalities of the characters, and their positions do not fundamentally change either. The story of *The Mill on the Floss* is easily comprehensible. The story of *Middlemarch* contains many vicissitudes⁶⁰⁵ before it reaches its moderately 'happy ending'. From the point of view of diversions in the main story-line, *Halálfiat* is between these two George Eliot novels.

The journeying of the characters in Babits's novel continues even after the reunion in Gádoros. From here on, however, Budapest becomes one of the most frequently occurring settings for further complications. Noémi, Gitta, Imrus, Jozsó

⁶⁰⁴ *The Mill on the Floss* ends with the death of Maggie and Tom. Maggie Tulliver's and Tom's innocence, liberal thinking, friendship and love prove incapable of survival in their own (earthly) environment. The novel finishes with the epitaph: 'In their death they were not divided', George Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss* (1985), p. 657.

⁶⁰⁵ An example is the circumstances around the reading of Mr Peter Featherstone's will [George Eliot, *Middlemarch* (p. 337). (One must, nevertheless, add that Fred Vincy's disappointment will not prevent him from becoming happily married to Mary Garth in the end (ibid., pp. 828-34). Another example is the transaction between Joshua Rigg and Bulstrode when Bulstrode buys Stone Court (ibid., pp. 520-30) and when his past is disclosed (ibid., p. 348; pp. 614-19; pp. 619-25.). Raffles's murder in which both Bulstrode (ibid., pp. 614-19; 686-88) and Lydgate (ibid., 697-700) are implicated is another such episode (ibid., pp. 704-712; 720). Lydgate's marriage, the fact that despite his medical training and commitment he is not successful either in his private or public life, Rosamund's accidental or devised miscarriage (ibid., pp. 457-9; 595-98; 647-667) and then Lydgate's death and Rosamund's view on his death (ibid., pp. 834-35) form a story that has many bitter sides to it.

and his wife all end up living in Budapest. Noémi works in a bank. Imrus and Gitta study at the same university. Jozsó and his wife are settled permanently in the Hungarian capital. In the interval between the meeting and parting in Gádoros, László Kovács's verse is published posthumously by Scharpinger. This volume gives Imrus further inspiration to take up a literary career. Cenci runs into debt again because of contaminated wine in the area which discourages people to buy local wine. The trouble makes Cenci stronger. It gives her even more energy to continue despite everything. She carries the difficulties of the whole family.

The action of the story-line in Budapest centres on Imrus's and Gitta's student life. Imrus does not move in with Jozsó and his wife as a lodger because he feels uncomfortable with them. He and Gitta become entirely immersed in university life. As I have already mentioned, they read and discuss Ruskin, Meredith, Spencer, Darwin, Haeckel, Nietzsche, and Wilde. Imrus and his fellows launch a magazine whose title is *Viharágyú*. This is to be sponsored by Gyula. Both Gitta and Imrus are *naïvely* led to believe that Gyula has money to support their enterprise. The issue of the magazine's foundation is the root of the next set of complications within the second half of the novel.

Gyula appears in the role of a debauchee capitalist bragging about his support for the latest intellectual trends. He relies on Scharpinger's reputation for being a patron of the arts. He gets money through his younger daughter, Noémi. She pretends to invest money that does not exist. Gyula deceives Imrus. The young student cannot see his real character despite the fact that he knows about his past. Gyula compares himself to King Lear. The narrator describes his pose as 'Byronic'. While Gyula is present, the Gothic and Byronic approach feature most prominently in the novel. When Imrus returns to Gádoros at Christmas, Nelli and Cenci become wary of

Gyula's reappearance. Imrus, however, goes back to Budapest before the end of the summer vacation because he finds his family's provinciality intolerable. From here on, the comings and goings of the characters take place within Budapest; between Budapest and Sót, and Budapest and Gádoros. Unlike in his hypotext models, the situation of Babits's characters is really grim at this stage. The only potentially successful male descendant slips out of the protective circle of both his family and society.

The launching of the magazine coincides with Döme's visit to Budapest. He commissions Imre to take out life-insurance for Nelli. Gyula gets Imrus to lend him Döme's money. He also suggests that the young man makes Noémi underwrite the whole sum. Imrus forges Döme's signature. When Döme's next letter arrives from Sót instructing him how to dispose of the sum, he realizes the full consequences of what he has done. Meanwhile Imrus becomes involved with Noémi again. He thinks she loves him while Noémi is having an affair with her boss. Gyula reappears. True to his Gothic and Byronic manner he puts on a great act proclaiming what a sinful villain he is. There is no way back from corruption and crime. The truth is revealed at Gádoros when Scharpinger meets Döme. He informs Döme on how his money was spent. He clarifies that he gave Imrus the money for a different purpose. He deems that Imrus has betrayed his trust. Faithful to his moral principles, Döme cannot absolve Imrus. As a result of the negotiation, Scharpinger sacks Noémi.

Before all this is fully revealed, Nelli learns from a letter that Scharpinger is looking for Imrus. The consequences of this letter set off the next set of complications which culminate in Noémi's, Imrus's and Nelli's further trials.

On receiving the letter, Nelli wants to sell her part of the vineyard. She has not enough money. She is also determined to set off to see Döme in order to apologise on

her son's behalf. Döme is uncompromising. His rejection makes all Nelli's good intentions come to naught. Thus the whole burden of finding Imrus falls on Cenci's shoulders. She has to deal with the debt he has accumulated as well. Cenci sets out to find Imrus. She first goes to Jozsó's flat. Imrus is not there, however. While she is trying to find Imrus, Imrus meets an old class-mate in the street. They spend the night drinking and talking. Then Imrus goes to the suburban woods on his own. He finally ends up at Rosenberg's flat on the brink of suicide. Gyula tries to blackmail Imrus by claiming that he destroyed Noémi. Gyula's manipulating accusations and his circumstances have a root in James Vane's speech in the London underworld:

Tisztelt Uram!—írta Gyula, mert ez a cím még a legaljasabb csábítót is megilleti—ha nem akarja, hogy megvetésem teljével sújtsam Önt, tegye jóvá, amit a szerencsétlen leány iránt elkövetett! Itt áll elhagyatva, kereset nélkül, merném mondani: egy falat kenyér nélkül, támasz nélkül! Önnek kötelessége karját nyújtani a gyámoltalan hölgynek. Mindent tudok, s nem titok előttem, hogy Ön *mit* köszönhet neki. Ön nem kockáztatott semmit. Gazdag rokonsága bizonynyal mindent eligazít. De az én leányom egész egzisztenciája kockán függ. [...] ⁶⁰⁶

It is worthwhile noting the corruption this narrative describes as opposed to the innocent world of Meredith's novels. James Vane's argument:

You wrecked the life of Sybil Vane', was the answer, 'and Sibyl Vane was my sister. She killed herself. I know it. Her death is at your door. I swore I would kill you in return. For years I have sought you. I had no clue, no trace. The two people who could have described you were dead. I knew nothing of you but the pet name she used to call you. I heard it tonight by chance. Make your peace with God, for tonight you are going to die.' ⁶⁰⁷

The motifs are similar in these two novels. Imrus, however, is not guilty while Dorian is guilty of insincerity. Gyula's bragging phraseology copies James Vane's

⁶⁰⁶ 'Dear Sir, Gyula wrote, because even the vilest of seducers can qualify to this title. Should you want to save yourself from my contempt, please remedy what you have done to my daughter! She is left without a living, without any support so much so that she has not even her daily bread. You are obliged to lend the helpless lady a hand. I know everything and I am perfectly clear about *what* she has done for you. You have risked nothing. Your well-to-do relatives will surely sort everything out for you. The life of my daughter is, nevertheless, at stake', *Halálfiái* (1984), p. 534.

⁶⁰⁷ Oscar Wilde, *Dorian Gray* (1985), pp. 202-11.

words. The difference between Vanes's words and Gyula's is that Vanes's are true to their meaning and Gyula's only hide his own crimes.

While his relatives are searching for Imrus, Rosenberg phones Jozsó and informs him that Imrus is with him. Cenci goes to Rosenberg's flat to take Imrus home and thus saves his life. It is a fact that Jozsó's prejudice against Rosenberg is stronger than any blood ties that could urge him to help Imrus. Before Imrus's return to Gádoros the narrator describes the behaviour of the rest of the family. Nelli is worried but unable to act. Jolán is dissatisfied but does not even try to change her situation. Emma feels superior to all the others in Gádoros. The depiction of the characters' thoughts mostly consist of interior monologues which are also main features of Thackeray's, Dickens's and George Eliot's fiction.⁶⁰⁸

Milyen jók, milyen jók mind! Csupa becsületesség, jóság szeretet erő mindenki! Csak én vagyok a hitvány, a gyenge, a becstelen, ügyetlen, nevetséges!—gondolta, de közben tudta már, hogy csak önlealázása kedvéért gondolja ebben a formában.⁶⁰⁹

An example from *Middlemarch*:

'I should learn everything then,' she said to herself, still walking quickly along the bridle road through the wood. 'It would be my duty to study that I might help him the better in his great works. There would be nothing trivial about our lives. Everyday things with us would mean the greatest things.'⁶¹⁰

Nelli goes off to Sót to see Döme but Döme does not receive either her or anyone else. She has to return to Gádoros without seeing him.⁶¹¹ These and countless

⁶⁰⁸Rába considers the interior monologues and the author's interruption of the interior monologues a product of Babits's utilisation of Meredith's works. György Rába, *Babits Mihály* (1983), p. 243.

⁶⁰⁹—How good they all are! How good, honest, strong and loving everyone is! Only I am useless, weak, dishonest, clumsy and ridiculous!—he thought but meanwhile he knew that he only thought like this in order to humiliate himself, *Halálfiat* (1984), p. 538.

⁶¹⁰George Eliot, *Middlemarch* (1994), p. 29.

⁶¹¹The description of Nelli's jewel-box in which she rummages to find some money to cover her travelling expenses reminds one of Dorothea's in *Middlemarch*: 'De most föltárult a nyitott ládikó, s a pénzen kívül néhány ékszer is került ki belőle: egy régi násfa, amit Jolán már úgyse hordott, mert nem volt divatos, egy aranyskarabeuszokból álló nyaklánc és mellkereszt, korallgyöngyök, bróssok; sőt egy másik dobozt is kihozott Jolán, melynek bársonyágyán egy készlet kis, ezüst evőeszköz hevert, ez is

other examples of the lack of cooperation between either members of the same family or members of the same society are generally unlike the situation in the English novels. They are, however, main symptoms of society's ineffectiveness in *Halálfiat*. The story-line finishes with Döme's and Cenci's travels. The journeying feature of Babits's hypertext novel of adventure dominate even at the end of *Halálfiat*. The final scene gives a paradoxical ending to Babits's work and thus smothers the tragic.

The key episode before the very end of the novel is Nelli's funeral. On this occasion Imrus returns from Transylvania where he works as a school-master in order to pay off his debt to Cenci. Although his way of living is compared to being dead and Transylvania to a dead land, his state of living death parallels his awakening from illusions and from 'the dream of a great verse epic'. He conscientiously devotes himself to work and pays off his moral and financial debt to Cenci. The potential of a

saját külön tulajdona, mert kereszttelőjére kapta még'; 'The little jewel-box was now open and apart from the money one could also find a few pieces of jewellery in it. One of these pieces was an old pendant which Jolán ceased wearing a long time before since it was out of fashion; a necklace a pendant crucifix, coral beads and brooches. Then Jolán got another box out at the bottom of whose cushioned velvet lining lay the set of silver cutlery which she got for her Christening', *Halálfiat* (1984), p. 514., 'The casket was soon open before them, and the various jewels spread out, making a bright parterre on the table. It was no great collection, but a few of the ornaments were really of remarkable beauty, the finest that was obvious at first being a necklace of purple amethyst set in exquisite gold work, and a pearl cross with five brilliants in it' George Eliot, *Middlemarch* (1994), p. 12. Nelli and Jolán go through their boxes because they think they need money. Dorothea and Celia do the same because they have some time to themselves and enjoy looking at them. Nelli's and Jolán's jewellery is more modest than that of the other two sisters. They all have crucifix pendants.

new start lies in his quiet existence. His post is in a village called Bethlen at Erdővár. The paradox of the end is that only the passively alive Imrus has in himself the promise of a new start in life while the aged Döme and Cenci remain the only actively travelling representatives of the family. Cenci is still in charge of the vineyard too. Her unflagging strength is, again, a manifestation of Babits's adaptation and vindication of the Virgilian ideal of agriculture according to the *Georgics*. To quote Babits, 'És mind a ketten a Halálra gondoltak, mely itt feledte őket, éppen az ingó, rozoga kocsiban'.⁶¹² The epilogue to the novel restates this paradox of living and creating while being passive. It claims that artists are like small Gods in their role of being creators, and that the non-autobiographical autobiography, that is the novel itself, creates life.

4.6 Conclusion

Halálfiai uses many conventions of English novel writing. It describes its world much like many nineteenth-century English novels in which it has its roots. I am thinking here of George Eliot's and George Meredith's works in particular. Its depiction and word-view is more pessimistic than most of its eighteenth-century English hypotext models of fiction. It is, however, architecturally, modelled on Fielding's and Smollet's works. While many English novels encourage individual characters to improve their personality, society as portrayed in *Halálfiai* is mostly ineffective in this regard. Through some positive and many negative examples, Babits's novel emphasises the need of a sound society. Babits's historical perspective is also akin to many of its nineteenth-century English models. It commences in the present which

⁶¹² 'And they were both thinking about death which had forgotten them, and left them in this rocking, ramshackle carriage', *ibid.*, 578.

reaches back into the past which changes back into the present.⁶¹³ The world it describes is, nevertheless, fundamentally unchanging despite its cyclical tendencies.⁶¹⁴ One of the most stable values of *Halálfiat* is linked to agriculture meaning a natural way of living. This is what unites Babits's various favourite sources such as Virgil (Ruskin and the Arts and Crafts Movements) and Meredith in his work. Cenci is the embodiment of this way of life.

In spite of the fact that *Halálfiat*'s depiction of its society is less complex than that of its nineteenth-century English models, its interest in the way society works is much like them. The way it describes society according to the changes in their members' attitudes towards each other is also the same. What can be a point of debate is the mood Babits attempts to create in his novel, and his novel's religious quality. This is also an issue of discussion in the case of nineteenth-century English novels. Babits applied liberal, biological, sociological and physiological theories in his writing. These strongly resemble George Eliot's approach to the themes of her novels.⁶¹⁵ *Halálfiat* must have roots in her works. The dominant mood and the judgemental basis of *Halálfiat* are, although mellow, but ultimately less forgiving than George Eliot's works.⁶¹⁶

Halálfiat contains a mixture of a wide variety of genres, as Babits listed them himself in the above quoted interviews. It also resembles in its composition many of

⁶¹³This approach is also characteristic of other nineteenth-century works, such as *Waverley*. Gillian Beer points out a reason why this temporal perspective of writing is relevant: 'By choosing a neutral, unfashionable period of the recent past he is, he says, deliberately 'throwing the force of my narrative upon the characters and passions of the actors; those passions common to men in all stages of society'. He seems to be working on the neo-classical principle that what is interesting is the *permanent* rather than the temporary impulses of man's nature', Gillian Beer, *The Romance* (1970), p. 65.

⁶¹⁴Cenci's debt and repayment of debt is a good example of this.

⁶¹⁵'The cosmology, sociology, and psychology of positivism led George Eliot to see reality as composed of an alien cosmos within which there exists a moral order which makes the world habitable for the human spirit and is a source of human values', George R. Creeger, *George Eliot: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Englewood Cliffs; New York: Prentice Hall, 1970), p. 19.

⁶¹⁶Stone writes this about *The Mill on the Floss* 'while Eliot analyses life from a realistic-scientific point of view, she puts her material together with an artistic-romantic desire to transcend that reality', Donald D. Stone, *The Romantic Impulse in Victorian Fiction* (Cambridge, M. A.; London, Harvard University Press, 1980), p. 165, and he writes about *Silas Marner*, 'Eliot's intention is very clearly to integrate character and society (as in a Schiller idyll) so that instead of the latter contaminating the former, the former will enrich the latter', *ibid.*, p. 220.

Thackeray's, Meredith's and George Eliot's novels.⁶¹⁷

Halálfiat has its roots most deeply in the fiction of George Eliot, Meredith and W. M. Thackeray. This is because of its complexity and its thoughtful approach to the world it describes. The world-view of George Eliot's and Thackeray's works is based on a fictional attempt at a fair rational consensus on how human beings act and what is beneficial for society. *Halálfiat* is likewise an investigation into the ethics of society. This includes matters of love and fairness in close relationships. All these novels show consequences of their characters' conduct. Despite their varying degrees of optimism, pessimism and complexity, both Babits's *Halálfiat* and its English models are representations of their authors' humane world-view.

⁶¹⁷See more on this in the above quoted secondary literature, and also Judith Wilt, *The Readable People of George Meredith* (New Jersey: P. U.P., 1975), and Barbara Hardy, *Forms of Feeling in Victorian Fiction* (London: Peter Owen, 1985).

***Elza pilóta* | CHAPTER 5**

5.1 Contents	212
5.2 A summary of secondary literature	213
5.3 The story-line of <i>Elza pilóta</i>	219
5.4 The main English sources of <i>Elza pilóta</i>	229
5.4.1 Thomas More's <i>Utopia</i> (1518)	233
5.4.2 Francis Bacon's <i>New Atlantis</i> (1627)	236
5.4.3 Jonathan Swift, <i>Gulliver's Travels</i> (1726)	239
5.4.4 Samuel Butler's <i>Erewhon</i>	243
5.4.5 Edgar Allan Poe	245
5.4.6 Herbert George Wells	251
5.4.6.1 Novels of behaviour	252
5.4.6.2 Novels of conflict and civilisation	258
5.4.6.3 A Modern romance	261
5.5 Conclusion	262

5.2 A summary of secondary literature

I provide an account of the secondary literature on *Elza pilóta* for two reasons. One, because no one has given a summary of it yet. Two, because the different views show many meanings of this complicated novel. One of its contemporary critics, Aladár Schöpflin (1933) distinguishes Babits's work from early utopias, such as Plato's and More's. These works sought to express the desire of mankind. He sees *Elza pilóta*'s origin in eighteenth-century works such as *Candide* because of its ironic use of the subtitle, *the perfect society*. Schöpflin claims what Babits also maintains, namely that *Elza pilóta* shows where it would lead if all the slogans and ideals of the contemporary world of the novel were to be fulfilled. Schöpflin observes that Babits expresses his ideas not only by depicting human lives but also through the events that happen to people. He deems the story of the small planet a fantastical inset. His final statement is that Babits's novel is not a prophecy but a warning, because it leaves God out. Schöpflin hopes that what *Elza pilóta* describes cannot take place on a planet that is created by God.⁶¹⁸

Frigyés Karinthy (1933) compares the novel to the *Book of Revelations* because it is a product of an outcry such as what John would have made if he had lived during the time of its writing. He claims that the novel's intention is to warn about the death of Europe; about the death of culture; about mankind's overprotection of property through which means can outweigh the end, and the world can sink into a state of eternal war. Karinthy also writes that because of mankind's lack of faith, all values can become expunged. Man can also make his prison so small that he will suffocate himself. Karinthy also compares Babits's novel to one by H. G. Wells. He

⁶¹⁸Nyugat, 2 (1933), 533-38.

does not specify which one but he must have had *The Shape of Things to Come* (1933) in mind. Karinthy does not do H. G. Wells justice. He claims that the fantastic in H. G. Wells is an end to itself while in Babits's work is a prophecy. It is a means serving a greater conception. In H. G. Wells it is a display of genius, a terrifying code and phosphorescent letters whose light shows things as if in the sense of the magic phrase *Mene Tekel*.⁶¹⁹ One must add that while Babits's statements agree with Schöpflin's view they do not agree with Karinthy's. Babits writes that his novel is a nightmare that can come true unless mankind does its best to make their world better. My reading of *Elza pilóta* sees the novel as a hypothetical argument which is independent of making a statement on the world's future.

János Dezső (1985) reads *Elza pilóta* as an analysis of the extent people can become debased in an excessively inhuman world. He rightly notes that Babits heightens the seriousness of the novel's message by placing this allegorical world in a real historical perspective. The events of *Elza pilóta* take place a generation within the time of its writing. Dezső maintains that Babits provided a bitter refutation of the ideals More expressed in his *Utopia*. He lists Asclepius, Hermes Trismegistus, and Biblical writers who considered states of the world without the existence of a god or gods. He mentions *Candide*, Spengler's, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*⁶²⁰ and St.

⁶¹⁹Nyugat, 2 (1933), pp. 544-46.

⁶²⁰Oswald Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes: Umriss einer Morphologie der Weltgeschichte* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1969). Oswald Spengler (1880-1936) was one of the philosophers of the Republic of Weimar. See *Literatur Lexikon: Autoren und Werke deutscher Sprache*, ed. Walther Killy, 15 vols. (Munich: Bertelsmann, 1988-1993), xi (1991), pp. 97-98. *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* regarded the culture of the West Faustian and as such that it has reached its zenith of its development and has entered the phase of decline which it calls civilisation. 'Die systematische Art der Weltbetrachtung hat im Abendlande während des vorigen Jahrhunderts ihren Gipfel erreicht und überschritten. Die physiognomie hat ihre große Zeit noch vor sich. In hundert Jahren werden alle Wissenschaften, die auf diesem Boden noch möglich sind, Bruchstücke einer einzigen ungeheuren Physiognomie alles Menschlichen sein', Oswald Spengler, *Das Untergang des Abendlandes* (1969), p. 135.

Wulfstan's work⁶²¹ as Babits's sources of inspiration. Dezső even compares Babits's work to Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* in detail. He deems that such as Babits, Huxley also projects the problems of the present into the future. The world both writers describe has an abstract moral dimension. Those who oppose the leading trend of the monolithic state are exiled in Huxley and tortured in Babits.⁶²² The chronology of the narrative symbolises the final negation of culture in each novel. *Brave New World* shows how people are conditioned,⁶²³ and brought up to fit in with the prevalent trend of power. *Elza pilóta* demonstrates that the war indirectly conditions people to do the same. Aging is artificially prevented in Huxley's novel. The war also kills people before they could grow old in Babits's work. Ethics are non-existent in both these worlds. As a result, people are reduced to exclusively biological and physiological entities.⁶²⁴ Dezső maintains that Huxley's novel is about the problems of science. It is an anti-science science-fiction, because it shows the negative consequences of an exaggeratedly scientific world-view.⁶²⁵ Babits's novel is also

⁶²¹St. Wulfstan was a native of Icentum in Warwickshire. After a tempting sight of wantonness, he became a monk. He practised great austerities, instructed children and was treasurer of the church. He became bishop of Worcester in 1062. A miracle forced William the conqueror to treat him with honour. Therefore the Normans did not replace him after the conquest. He raised the number of monks to fifty at Worcester. He was canonized in 1203, and died in 1095. See Alban Butler, *The Fathers, Martyrs and other Principal Saints*, i, pp. 78-79. Lionel Butler and Chris Given-Wilson, *Medieval Monasteries of Great Britain* (London: Michael Joseph, 1983), p. 31, 396.

⁶²²In the *Republic* by Plato public life has priority over private life. Mill believed that private interest ought to be harmonious with that of the public: 'but also that a direct impulse to promote the general good may be in every individual one of the habitual modes of action, and the sentiments connected therewith may fill a large and prominent place in every human being's sentient existence', 'Utilitarianism' in John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism, Liberty and Representative Government* (London and New York: Dent and Dutton, 1954), p. 16. Also: 'we ought to shape our conduct by a rule which all rational beings might adopt *with benefit to their collective interest*', *ibid.*, p. 49. Both in Babits's and Huxley's novels one finds an extreme version of this idea.

⁶²³The idea of regulated child-bearing—'Major instruments of social stability. Standard men and women; in uniform batches. The whole of a small factory staffed with the products of a single bakanovskified egg', Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World* (New York: Harper and Row, 1946), p. 6.—can be found in both novels. The treatise that could well have been a source of this idea is T. R. Malthus, 'An Essay on the Principle of Population'.

⁶²⁴János Dezső, 'Babits Elza pilótája mint antiutopia', *Úzenet*, 5 (1989) (369-78).

⁶²⁵'The theme of *Brave New World* is not the advancement of science as such; it is the advancement of

about what people will do to their world if they lose their humanity.⁶²⁶ I find that issues of social hierarchy are more crucial for Huxley⁶²⁷, while either inter-cultural understanding or war for Babits.

One must mention that Babits was about to finish *Elza pilóta* in 1930-31 and conclude that Huxley's novel was published only in 1932. Amongst their sources, such as Voltaire, Huxley's novel compares best to *L'Ingénu* (1767)⁶²⁸ while Babits's to *Candide* (1759).⁶²⁹

The reader is introduced to the ins and outs of the 1689 French court in Versailles through the point of view of a savage (natural man) and his loving helper, Mlle. De St. Yves in *L'Ingénu*. The reader is shown an over systemised scientific world through the eyes of again a savage and his unhappy friend, Bernard Marx in *Brave New World*. The reason why Dezső compares *Elza pilóta* to *Candide* is most likely because both Candide and Elza are travellers. They get to know the world in which they must live from an outsider's point of view. The world they become acquainted with is equally disillusioning in both instances. It is the opposite of one where everything is as well as possible.

György Rába (1983) sees *Elza pilóta* as social criticism which is aimed at providing a view of contemporary society. He reads it more as a warning than a prophecy in which he is right.

science as it affects human individuals', Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World* (1946), p. xii.

⁶²⁶Tibor Déry's *G. A. úr X. -ben*'s preoccupations are similar to Huxley's *Brave New Worlds*. It is more similar to Huxley's work than Babits's, and comes to an entirely different conclusion from Babits or Huxley by praising the elementary pleasures of human life.

⁶²⁷A. L. Morton's point of view agrees with my opinion. He writes, 'Happiness without Grace can be secured only at the price of subordinating the individual, of distorting him to fit the desired pattern', A. L. Morton, *The English Utopia* (London and Wishart, 1952), p. 200.

⁶²⁸The years of publication are taken from Geoffrey Brereton, *A Short History of French Literature* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), p. 89.

⁶²⁹*Ibid.*, p. 89.

Az einsteini relativitás eszméjétől ihletett⁶³⁰ "Kis Föld"-ről a befejezés azt sugallja, hogy fölgyorsított történelme az igazi regénycselekmény, amelyet tanulságul olvasunk: minden csak a mesterséges kísérlet volt.⁶³¹

Rába wrongly claims that this novel is well ahead of its time in terms of its having an overlapping double narrative which is without precedents. I will return to this point in detail because close antecedents of *Elza pilóta* exist right across the history of English fiction. Rónay selects the general who commands Dezső's and his fellows' executions as the central character of the novel. He deems that Babits's selection of him is a sign of his acumen because history proved Babits's view right by producing characters such as Vermes.

In contrast with the above critics, László Rónay (1982) sees the explanation and background of *Elza pilóta*'s story-line more in the contemporary European situation of the novel's writing than in the psychology of its characters. Dezső, Schöpflin, and Karinthy see Elza's desertion as a result of bitter disillusionment she develops at the front. A concrete example is the cruelty of Dezső's execution which she has to witness. Rónay, however, sees it more justly as one means to make a statement on the novel's contemporary national and international environment. Rónay's thinks of the German and Italian nationalism during the 1920s. (One must mention that Hungarian nationalism was not any better either.) Rónay writes that Schulberg's character shows Babits's utilisation of Rudolf Carnap's (1891-1970) thoughts and Percy William Bridgman's (1882-1961) philosophy. According to him,

⁶³⁰Most critics mention Einstein's theory in connection with *Elza pilóta*. It is, however, only Einstein's theory of general relativity (1915) that inspired Babits in *Elza pilóta*.

⁶³¹'The end of the novel about 'the small planet' which is inspired by Einstein's theory of relativity suggests that its accelerated story-line is the main story of the novel, which reduces everything to the level of an artificial experiment', György Rába, *Babits Mihály* (1983), p. 277.

Babits might also have been inspired by other views of *Erkenntnis*⁶³² in creating Schulberg. Rónay rightly compares Babits's views of science to Heidegger's philosophy from the point of view that Heidegger deemed science heedless.⁶³³ Rónay also quotes William James whose works Babits admired. According to James, the pragmatists, 'reality is dumb, and will not give anything away about itself. We talk on behalf of it'.⁶³⁴ Rónay also considers Spengler's philosophy the basis of Babits's thoughts in *Elza pilóta*. This entails the concept of birth, decline and death of cultures. It maintains that terror as a standard results in the elimination of the borderline between war and peace, soldiers and civilians, truth and propaganda. Rónay concludes that in *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* Spengler comes to the same conclusion about civilisation as Babits in *Elza pilóta*. I must add that even Spengler's approach is more optimistic than Babits's. The cosmos in Spengler is friendly and peaceful. World-wide peace is possible in the sphere of the spirit:

Da, in den Seelen, ist der Weltfriede Wirklichkeit geworden, der Friede Gottes, die Seligkeit greiser Mönche und Einsiedler, und da allein. Er hat jene Tiefe im Ertragen von Leid geweckt, welche der historische Mensch in dem Jahrtausend seiner Entfaltung nicht kennen lernt.⁶³⁵

Finally, Rónay agrees with Schöpfung in that God is left out of the world of *Elza pilóta*. The scientist takes God's place. Rónay compares the novel's world and thus the cosmos Babits depicts to that of Ninive. He finds that Babits's narrator is

⁶³²Bridgman and Carnap contributed to *Erkenntnis* in the 1930s in Vienna. László Rónay, 'Látomás a pusztuló és önpusztító világról', *Literatura* 3-4 (1980) (428-457), p. 430.

⁶³³Ibid., p. 431.

⁶³⁴László Rónay quotes from *Polgári filozófia a huszadik században* (Budapest 1976), pp. 72-104. The most outstanding expert of Babits's assimilation of William James's philosophy is György Rába who devotes complete chapters to this subject in György Rába, *Babits Mihály költészete 1903-1920* (1981). He also talks about the same connection briefly in *Babits Mihály* (1983).

⁶³⁵Oswald Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes: Umriss einer Morphologie der Weltgeschichte* (1969), p. 1107.

similar to Jonah. He wrongly attributes a Don Quixote like quality to Jonah.⁶³⁶

He also compares this novel to Herbert Marcuse's *Eros and Civilisation* (1955).⁶³⁷ He writes that Marcuse's work contains almost the same wording at certain places as Babits's *Elza pilóta*. Marcuse's work could not have been Babits's source since it was published much later than this novel.

Rónay thinks that this novel was a loud protest, warning and prophecy to make people realise that their world carries the potential of what Babits describes.

Therefore it has to be looked after as it is. I must add that Babits intended *Elza pilóta* not only as all these things but also as an antidote to what might come about.⁶³⁸

Lajos Pók (1983) quotes Karinthy in connection with what he has to say about this particular novel. He sees *Elza Pilóta* as an expression of Babits's political, and *a fortiori* personal view of his contemporary environment.⁶³⁹

As I have shown above, interpretations of *Elza pilóta* vary. Some focus on one line of the story, others on a particular character, still others on another line of the story or another character. One can ideally aim at a view that takes all story-lines into consideration. Such an approach excludes the attribution of disproportionate importance to single incidents and the psychology of individual characters.

5.3 The story-line of *Elza pilóta*

The story of the war of *Elza Pilóta* is divided into parts by a separate narrative which

⁶³⁶László Rónay, 'Látomás a pusztuló és önpusztító világról', *Literatura* 3-4 (1980) (428-457), p. 433. I would not compare Jonah to Don Quixote. The point about Jonah is that he resists God's plea which is his calling. Finally, however, he accepts God's guidance and his vocation. (He is not an archaic and unrealistically idealistic knight such as Don Quixote).

⁶³⁷Ibid. p. 432.

⁶³⁸László Rónay, 'Látomás a pusztuló és önpusztító világról', in László Rónay, *Szabálytalan arcképek* (Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1982), pp. 90-107.

⁶³⁹Lajos Pók, *Babits Mihály* (1983), pp. 149-52.

is only partially connected with the main one. This narrative weaves its theme through the major line. Babits began to think about *Elza pilóta* as early as in 1918. He wrote it after the shock of the Great War. According to an interview that took place on the thirteenth November 1931, Elza's story had been written before its frame.⁶⁴⁰ Babits wrote,

A Fekete Olvasó című regényemet félannyival meghosszabítom. Keretet írok hozzá. Nagy munka, de az átdolgozás nagyon érdekel. A regényírás most minden időmet elveszi.⁶⁴¹

I will give a detailed description of the whole story-line for several reasons.

First, because, like *Kártyavár*, *Timár Virgil fia* and *Halálfiái*, this novel has not been translated into English. Second, because its story is fairly complicated.—This is one cause why no one has provided a good summary of it even in Hungarian. The other cause is the general neglect of Babits's prose.—Third because it not only has a complex but also an ingenious story-line.

The main narrative begins under the heading of 'the perfect society'. The subheading under this is a 'historical introduction'. The beginning of the story's chronology is tied to the beginning of the fortieth year of the eternal war that the novel is about. This section contains a simile that refers to Roman history: 'Az örök harc negyvenedik esztendejét írták. Mint a rómaiak hajdan városuk alapításától, úgy jelezték már az éveket is: *A háború kitörésétől kezdve*'.⁶⁴² This can be interpreted as an allusion to a non-Christian warring world. As I have shown above, many critics

⁶⁴⁰By the term frame that Babits calls 'records' I refer to the scientist's narrative, which divides the novel's story-line of the war into several parts.

⁶⁴¹'I am in the process of lengthening my novel, *Fekete olvasó*, by half, and am writing a frame for it. It is an immense amount of work but I am really interested in reworking it. The composition takes up all my time at the moment', '*Itt a halk és komoly beszéd ideje*' (1997), p. 304.

⁶⁴²'It was the fortieth year of eternal warfare. They kept an account of the years in the way the Romans did: *from the outbreak of the war*', Mihály Babits, *A gólyakalifa, Kártyavár, Timár Virgil fia, Elza pilóta*, ed. György Belia (Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1982), p. 463.

interpret this feature of *Elza pilóta*. It can also point to another root of Babits's work, *The Aeneid*. War and its terrible consequences are a central subject matter of this verse epic, too:

Arma virumque cano, Troiae qui primus ab oris
 Italiam fato profugus Laviniaque venit
 Litora, multum ille et terris iactatus et alto
 Vi superum, saevae memorem Iunonis ob iram,
 Multa quoque et bello passus, dum conderet urbem
 Inferretque deos Latio;⁶⁴³

In both these works war is partly a pretext for discussing civilisation, because the lack of humane behaviour inevitably leads to war.

Babits's narrator refers to the actual time of the novel's writing as that of the second quarter of the twentieth century. The central event of this part, before the first part of the sub-narrative, is a bomb alert. The three protagonists of it are the mother and the father of Elza, Mr and Mrs Kamuthy, and Professor Schulberg, who is with them. The Kamuthy's dead son Gézuka, and Elza's university friends play an important role in the development of the story. The Kamuthy family is introduced as Austro-Hungarian. The mother, Lívia, is constantly worried about her daughter. In contrast to her, Mr Géza Kamuthy is calm. His calmness verges on indifference. During the bomb alert Elza's mother cannot find Elza. She turns to Elza's friends to find out where Elza is. Margaret, Elza's best friend, introduces Elza's 'boy-friend': Dezső. The description of Budapest is surrealistic. A rubber air-raid shelter, with chimneys, surrounds the city. Its function is to defend the capital against the enemy's gas raids. The inhabitants of the city occupy places on different levels of the air-raid

⁶⁴³ 'This is a tale of arms and of man. Fated to be an exile, he/ was the first to sail from the land of Troy and reach Italy, / at its Lavinian shore. He met many tribulations on his way both / by land and on the ocean; high Heaven willed it, for Juno was / ruthless and could not forget her anger. And he had also to / endure great suffering in warfare. But at last he succeeded in founding his city, and installing the gods of his race in the Latin land:', Virgil, *The Aeneid* (1968), lines 1-5, p. 27.

shelter according to a strict hierarchy. Animals are not allowed into the shelter for financial and sanitary reasons. Amongst others, the Kamuthy family and Professor Schulberg are members of the 'first class'. Their level is the airiest. They also have their own private cabins. During the first bomb alert Professor Schulberg says to Mrs Kamuthy that the cultured and civilised quality of humanity is a mistake. He claims that humankind, like other creatures, is born to develop through warfare. Schulberg also takes Elza's mother, Livia, onto the top of a chimney to show her the quiet city underneath, awaiting the gas bomb attack. Mr and Mrs Kamuthy soon wish to retire to the malodorous shelter.

Schulberg has a book whose subject matter supplies the thematic link between the story of the eternal war, and the sub-story of the novel. This book was written in the nineteenth century. It outlines ideals that the age of the eternal war has come to embody. The ideals are international unity above nationalities and a collectively developing society without economic problems. According to the professor, the universalising effect of the war is to realise all these.⁶⁴⁴ Schulberg introduces the book to Livia as the biography of a scientist who tries to explore the origin of life. The scientist is correctly compared to Don Quixote⁶⁴⁵ in this book. He devotes himself and all the resources at his disposal to his research. Thus he is completely oblivious to the war that surrounds him. He is also likened to the Creator. He produces a little earth on which the pace of movements and time are faster than on his own planet. This is watched through a chronomicroscope. The chronomicroscope slows time down and magnifies space for the spectator. The scientist converses with a journalist

⁶⁴⁴One can find the same thoughts in H. G. Wells's *The Shape of Things to Come*, as I will illustrate below.

⁶⁴⁵*Ez a tudós inkább Don Quichotte, mint hős*; 'This scientist is more of a Don Quixote than a hero', Elza pilóta (1982), p. 499. See section 4.4.1: 'Don Quixote' in *Halálfiat*.

and shows him 'life' in its primeval unicellular form. The narrator mentions two appearances of a comet. At its first appearance the comet removes the small planet from the big or 'real' one. At its second appearance, (thirty years after the first, according to the chronology of the 'real planet',) it brings it back within the sphere of observation. According to folk belief this appearance of the comet heralds the outbreak of the war. According to the narrative, it happens simultaneously with the disappearance of the scientist who has his records from the 'real' world on him.⁶⁴⁶ Schulberg says to Livia during their conversation: '*A harc győzött az elmélet fölött*'⁶⁴⁷ because life still continues on the scientist's small planet. At the end of their meeting, the professor lends the scientist's biography to Mrs Kamuthy. She promises him that she is going to read it. This is the closing episode of the first part of the sub-story. It is also the end of the first part of the novel.

The second part introduces the various levels of the shelter. Elza's mother expects support from Professor Schulberg. She hopes that he will be able to save her daughter from recruitment. Mr Kamuthy regards her behaviour as hysterical.⁶⁴⁸ The central episode of this part focuses on a rabid dog called Aida who gets into the shelter. Aida breaks loose and runs wild. The path of the dog downwards is followed by the narrator. The lower levels are noisy. One is introduced to couples enjoying 'life'; crying infants whose bellowing is mingled with jazz; people on top of each

⁶⁴⁶I will show Babits's English models that use the comet as a central image. I must, nevertheless, mention that Jókai used the comet in a similar manner in '*Az üstökös útja*', 'The path of the comet' és '*A láthatatlan csillag*', 'The invisible star'. One must add that Jókai was well-read in English literature and used English models, too. The protagonist of '*A láthatatlan csillag*' is called Mr Drayson and his companions in the story are Smith, Davidson and Drumfield. See *Jókai Mór elbeszélések*, ed. Dénes Lengyel and Miklós Nagy, 5 vols. (Budapest: Akadémiai (1971-1989), i: *Elbeszélések (1842-1848)* (1971), pp. 400-21; vol. iii, *Elbeszélések (1851)* (1973), p. 35.

⁶⁴⁷'*struggle has conquered theory*', *Elza pilóta*, (1982), p. 501.

⁶⁴⁸She has reasons to be upset and worried because of her dead son and her daughter's position in the war. Her behaviour is only normal. See *Hysteria in Encyclopedia of Psychology*, ed. Raymond J. Corsini, 2nd edn. (New York and Toronto: John Wiley and Sons, 1994), pp. 201-02.

other, a woman in labour and other naturalistic descriptions of life. Finally Aida is caught. She is put down at the bottommost level of the shelter. The owner of the dog is very upset. Livia is a calm person compared to her. She is a normal mother. Her conversation with the professor introduces Elza to the reader more closely. One gets to know Elza as a student of the history of religion. She is the last representative of culture among her generation:

Elza úgy nőtt föl, mint valaki a régi, boldog, tudós gyermekekből, könyvek között, ős, nagy gondolatok, nemes költészet hatásai alatt. Egészen más, mint ezek a mai háborús leányok vagy pláne fiúk... Elzát sikerült elszigetelni, tudatosan a háború előtti kultúra légkörében. Talán az egyetlen ő, az utolsó... Mikor még szellemibb időket élt az emberiség.⁶⁴⁹

This part of the novel is punctuated by the falling and explosion of bombs while panic prevails in the shelter. Meanwhile the value of the individual and the general nature of war are being discussed. It finishes with the Professor giving an appointment to Elza through her mother. The end of the attack also leads up to the second chapter of the sub-story.

This second subchapter introduces the small planet in a dialogue between the Japanese scientist and a group of visitors. The introduction is based on the records of Eckermann⁶⁵⁰, who is the scientist's research assistant. The scientist's laboratory is in the Zoological Garden. He talks about his creation to the visitors. His daughter,

⁶⁴⁹Elza grew up like one of those happy knowledgeable children of yore surrounded by books and under the influence of great ancient thoughts and noble verse. She was completely different from today's war-time girls and especially boys... Elza was successfully isolated in the atmosphere of pre-war culture. She was perhaps the only one, the very last one... from when humanity lived a more spiritual existence', *Elza pilóta* (1982), p. 517.

⁶⁵⁰Johann Peter Eckermann (1792-1854) was a German critic who studied in Göttingen. He was Goethe's secretary 1823-32. This Eckermann might well have been Babits's model in his depiction of his scientist's assistant: Eckermann. Eckermann writes: 'Diese Sammlung von Unterhaltungen und Gesprächen mit Goethe ist größtenteils aus den mir inwohnenden Naturtriebe entstanden, irgendein Erlebtes, das mir wert oder merkwürdig erscheint, durch schriftliche Auffassung mir anzueignen. [...] und ich ergriff gerne den Inhalt seiner Worte und notierte ihn mir, um ihn für mein ferneres Leben zu besitzen', Johann Peter Eckermann's *Gespräche mit Goethe in den letzten Jahren seines Lebens*, ed. Fritz Bergemann (Wiesbaden: Insel, 1995), p. 7.

Marianne, is with him. The small planet moves in a vacuum. It is completely separated from the atmosphere of the Earth. The scientist talks about his planet as a minute copy of the Earth. He is to populate it with human beings so that the history of humanity should take place all over again.

The real world is immersed in the war. As a contrast, the scientist remains detached because he is completely preoccupied with his child planet. This planet is threatened by a comet. The scientist is prepared to defend it from its destructive power. This second sub-chapter ends with the alleged imminent appearance of the comet.

The third main part begins at the University of Budapest, among Elza's friends. Elza has learnt to fly a plane. She burns her study-notes from years back. She proclaims the ineffectiveness of everything she has learnt, and is determined to go to war. The narrator contrasts Elza's defiant bellicosity and a privileged and therefore disabled (because of mutilation⁶⁵¹) man's pugnacity with Dezső's ordinary, unprivileged position. Dezső admires Elza for her outstanding knowledge of different cultures. He has seen the cruelty of the war in which he has had to participate. He despairs of Elza's behaviour. Elza's mother is likewise afraid of Elza's conduct. She gets Margaret to persuade Elza to accept her appointment with Professor Schulberg. Margaret jokes about Elza and Dezső getting married, but Elza will not even hear of marriage, let alone the idea of having an obligatory child. They meet another man who, like Dezső, has temporarily returned from the front. He has adopted the spirit of the war, as a consequence of which he enjoys seeing blood and murder. The last episodes of this third main part describes Elza's and Dezső's innocent love-affair. It

⁶⁵¹Mutilation is the correct word. 'The action of depriving (a person or animal) of a limb or of the use of a limb; the excision or maiming (of a limb or bodily organ)', See OED (1989), vol. x, p. 150.

also tells the reader about the shock Elza experiences as a result of Dezső's attempt to make love to her. She is frightened of what she calls a beastly quality in her friend. At the end of this part Dezső leaves for the front while Elza goes off to meet the professor. Schulberg discovers her passion for flying, and offers her a position as a pilot in his crew.

The third subchapter, which follows this third part returns again to Schulberg's book. He reproaches Mrs Kamuthy for not having finished reading it, thus failing to appreciate the opportunity to read a story such as the six days of creation. Schulberg, nevertheless, reads it aloud as if he were reading the Bible. The extract he reads contains the appearance of the comet, climate changes on the small planet, and the final disappearance of the small planet. Then it briefly summarises the return of the comet, together with the reappearance of the small planet thirty years after the previous event. On this occasion, however, the scientist disappears. Despite Schulberg's recommendation, Livia leaves the book behind.

The fourth main part begins by describing the prospect of Elza's cooperation with Professor Schulberg. She is retraining to become the Professor's pilot. She learns to act like a man. She sets off to reconnoitre the enemy's land without even saying farewell to her mother. She sends her a letter only. Elza, Professor Schulberg, and János fly blind through gas fog, over the devastated planet which is now without any signs of rural life. The end of this part leads the reader back to the home of Elza's parents. As might be expected, Mr Kamuthy is calm, and Livia is anxious. She is expecting Elza home when she gets the news, through Margaret, that Elza has set off for the front with Professor Schulberg.

The fourth subchapter is the continuation of Elza's and the Professor's dialogue while in flight. Prof. Schulberg compares the state of the Earth below to

descriptions of the devastated state of the small planet which compresses space, time and history. The disappearance of the scientist with the chronomicroscope, which can make the small planet visible, is mentioned again. The scientist had wanted to escape from the real world of war onto his creation, and died because of the immense difference in volume between the two worlds. Professor Schulberg compares his own position in the air to that of the scientist. A parallel of captivity and scale exists between the two stories at this point. Schulberg is well above his planet in understanding, but, like the scientist, he has no way of escaping from it. The parallel Schulberg draws between himself and the scientist not only presupposes that the Earth is a bigger version of the small planet but also that it is one planet amongst a series of similar planets.

The fifth main part opens with the description of the devastated landscape from the air. Elza and the Professor land on the front line. They inspect their camp and take a tour in the underground tunnel system which is continually being extended. Elza staggers. She can hardly cope with the damp, fetid atmosphere, and the sight of semi-human, decomposing bodies. She also encounters subterranean skeletons under the ground. She becomes covered in slimy mud. They meet Zoltán Vermes, whom Elza has already met. Faithful to what one read of him earlier on, he has remained committed to the war. At the time of Elza's and the Professor's visit he performs the execution of Dezső and his friends. They have tried to revolt against fighting. Elza and Schulberg leave János behind, and take off on their own. Schulberg falls asleep on board, as a consequence of which Elza flies the plane in the direction she wants to. She can see her people scattered among other peoples. She crosses the front line, and lands on enemy territory. The enemy is the antipodes, who do not believe in nations. The landscape remains unchanged: it is dug up and devastated just as it is on the other

side of the front line. After the initial shock, Schulberg bitterly says to Elza that it is not the home or home-land that is the 'god' of people, but the war. Professor Schulberg finds it impossible to understand the enemy's language, while Elza finds it difficult to communicate with them. Elza is not only exposed to mental torment but also to physical torture to a lesser extent. Finally the enemy decides to use the Professor as a physician and Elza as a pilot. Elza is told to fly to Budapest to bomb the city. She sets out to perform this task. The story ends with the death of Elza's mother, who, at a bomb alert, is too depressed to get into the air-raid shelter. She dies outside. When Elza flies over what used to be her home-land she finds it derelict. In the detached but slightly sarcastic tone of the narrator, she describes it as more interesting from the air than what it used to be when she lived there.

The fifth subchapter, which is the closing part of the frame's story-line, returns to Schulberg: the story of the scientist and the small planet. Schulberg is in the 'enemy's camp' on duty when he observes an approaching luminous black cloud-like phenomenon in the sky: 'Schulberg megsejtette, a kronomikroszkóppal kezében hajolt a számára mikroszkopikus kicsinységű világ fölé'.⁶⁵² According to Schulberg's and the scientist's extant manuscripts, which the narrator finds in a bottle, the small planet—which is one in a series of man-made planets—is the same as the planet of the eternal war and the cloud-like thing Schulberg sees is the scientist with his chronomicroscope. The sub-narrative, which is a parallel of the main narrative, finishes with the narrator first quoting the last notes of the scientist, then those of Schulberg. Both are about them leaving their own planets while making their final records. The scientist's notes explain the working of the ballistic tool that is to send

⁶⁵² 'it occurred to Schulberg that the—for him—microscopically small planet was under the lens of the scientist's chronomicroscope', *Elza pilóta*, (1982), p. 655.

his writing back into space. Not only the fall of his tools on the other planet, but also his movements destroy masses of ant-like creatures who are social beings, such as man. Both the scientist and Schulberg find notes written by these small creatures. After this episode, the narrative ends with Schulberg's final annotations, written as he is about to suffocate. It is noteworthy that the narrator's story, Eckermann's, the scientist's and Schulberg's records are all different story-lines which form the main narrative.

5.4 The main English sources of *Elza pilóta*

Babits claims that *Elza pilóta* is a dark utopia: 'Sötét utópia, nem kívánatos, hogy valaha is bekövetkezzék'.⁶⁵³ According to the wide range of varieties this genre allows, it is really a utopia. The word *utopia* is of Greek origin. *Τοπο* means place. The alternative spellings of u that is *ευ* and *ου*, give this word contrary meanings. *Ου* means 'non' and 'not' and *ευ* means good. *Ουτοπια* therefore means either a non-place or a place that does not exist, and *ευτοπισ* means an imaginary island, a region of ideal happiness.⁶⁵⁴ One can conclude that *utopia* can thus simultaneously mean a non-place and an ideal place.⁶⁵⁵ Originally *utopia* did not presuppose a distinction between what later became understood as utopia versus dystopia meaning anti-utopia. An ironic interpretation and use of *utopia* must have contributed to its several meanings. More exploited the potential variants of this word's meanings in his work, *Utopia* (1516). According to his usage *utopia* first denotes an island enjoying a

⁶⁵³'It is a dark utopia which will hopefully never come true', *Itt a halk és komoly beszéd ideje* (1997), p. 298.

⁶⁵⁴*The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd edn., ed. J. A. Simpson and E. S. L. Weiner, 20 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), v, p. 19.

⁶⁵⁵Babits describes his use of the original Greek meaning of the word utopia in his *Az európai irodalom története* (1979), p. 153.

perfect system. Second, it can refer to an either imaginary or indefinitely-remote region, country, locality, even state. It also can mean an ideally perfect condition in respect of social order. Another possible meaning of it is an idealistic scheme for social improvement.⁶⁵⁶ The two contrary variants and the several meanings of this word are merged in the application of not only utopia but even dystopia after More.

In relation to *Elza pilóta*, one could object to this definition by claiming that Babits's novel does have real locations. This feature, nevertheless, is part of the ambiguity and complexity of utopia since most utopias have real locations. Their real places become part of the narrative which does not only support their geographical reality but also refutes it by its fantastic description. Good examples of this feature are More's *Utopia*, Bacon's *New Atlantis*, Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, Samuel Butler's *Erewhon*, *Elza pilóta*, Wells's utopian novels, such as *The Time-Machine*, and *The War of the Worlds*.

Desmond MacCarthy claims that *Erewhon* and *Gulliver's Travels* are not utopias because 'an imaginary civilisation is used as a device for criticising our own'.⁶⁵⁷ Babits's work also belongs to this group. One must, however, note that every utopia and dystopia share this feature. Chris Ferns rightly claims:

every narrative has *some* ideological implications, however deeply buried: the decision to tell one story rather than another, to present the story one way rather than another, is always to some extent—however indirectly—conditioned by ideological assumptions.⁶⁵⁸

Fénelon in *Télémaque* criticises Louis XIV. More in his *Utopia* criticises Henry VIII.

The authors' grievance was the rulers' passion for war and luxury. They also felt bad

⁶⁵⁶*The Oxford English Dictionary* (1989), XIX, pp. 370-71.

⁶⁵⁷Marie Louise Berneri, *Journey through Utopia* (London: Freedom, 1987), p. 218.

⁶⁵⁸Chris Ferns, *Narrating Utopia: Ideology, Gender, Form in Utopian Literature* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), p. 17.

about the rulers' neglect of not only agriculture but also the welfare of the peasant population.⁶⁵⁹ Bacon hoped that his work would find favour with King James, who liked to think of himself as modern Solomon. Boyle, Glanwill and Sprat followed Bacon's ideals at the foundation of the Royal Society in 1662.⁶⁶⁰ Swift's work not only illustrates his hatred of war and exploitation but also shows his ambivalence towards Anglo-Irish relations.⁶⁶¹ Butler attacks 'mechanical materialism', 'Darwinism' and 'English criminal justice' in *Erewhon*. His work manifests his and his contemporaries' lack of confidence in their own achievements.⁶⁶² H. G. Wells's works show his rejection of Marxism. He preferred Fabianism.⁶⁶³

The criticism of the authors' own societies is always stronger with the dystopian branch of utopia. Its distortions, exaggerations and sometimes satirical attitudes draw the readers' attention even more closely to the most unjust trends in society. A. L. Morton writes about *Gulliver's Travels*: Swift's misanthropy is that of the representative of a defeated class, yet, though he fought against bourgeois values in the name of the past, the very fact that he fought against them honestly and courageously held within it the ground for a new standpoint in which the future could be comprehended'.⁶⁶⁴

The state in dystopia is mostly monolithic. The horrors of this state ask for the readers sympathy towards the narrator who often relates the cruelty in an objective manner.⁶⁶⁵ This is true in the case of *Gulliver's Travels*, *Erewhon*, H. G. Wells's

⁶⁵⁹Ibid., p. 176.

⁶⁶⁰A. L. Morton, *The English Utopia* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1952), p. 66.

⁶⁶¹A more accurate description of the background of *Gulliver's Travels* can be found in *ibid.*, pp. 90-101.

⁶⁶²A. L. Morton, *The English Utopia* (1952), p. 144-48.

⁶⁶³Ibid., pp. 191-94.

⁶⁶⁴Ibid., p. 110.

⁶⁶⁵A similar line of thought can be found in Ferns, *Narrating Utopia* (1999), p. 118.

dystopias and *Elza pilóta*.

A point following from the above is that all utopias and dystopias discuss the moral make-up of mankind. They also examine the course of civilisation under the guise of their colourful themes. This includes the sexual question from a moralist point of view. Sexual relationships and marriages are almost exclusively subjected to the interest of a community or even state.⁶⁶⁶ All utopias are idealistic. The highly critical approach of the dystopias is also a disguise of idealism. Edward Rothstein writes, 'But whatever the political position, whatever balance is established between unchanging nature and ever-changing culture, some view of an unreachable ideal seems unavoidable'.⁶⁶⁷

Frank Manuel rightly observes that all utopias (and dystopias also) 'tell us about the sensibility of the societies in which they were produced'.⁶⁶⁸ He distinguishes among "utopias of calm felicity", "dynamic socialist and other historically determinist utopias". He separates "psychological and philosophical utopias" which he calls "eupsychia" as well.⁶⁶⁹ More's and Bacon's belong to the first kind. Most of the utopias I am concerned with in my work are socialistic. The dystopias are totalitarian and monolithic. They, nevertheless, do not all abolish private property. Bacon's, Babits's and H. G. Wells's *A Modern Utopia* are good examples of this type. Both Babits's and H. G. Wells's works are dominantly psychological and philosophical works.

⁶⁶⁶Dorothy F. Donnelly, *Patterns of Order and Utopia* (London: Macmillan, 1998), p. 75. The utopias of the French Enlightenment view this issue differently. Diderot, Gabriel de Foigny and Sade aimed to break with this attitude. Ibid., p. 15-16.

⁶⁶⁷Edward Rothstein, 'Utopia and its Discontents', in Edward Rothstein, Herbert Muschamp, Martin E. Marty, *Visions of Utopia* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 14.

⁶⁶⁸Donnelly, *Patterns of Order and Utopia* (1998), p. 4.

⁶⁶⁹Ibid., p. 4.

5.4.1 Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516)

Babits mentions Thomas More's *Utopia* twice in his *Az európai irodalom története*.⁶⁷⁰

He deems the features that I have described above as relevant in the case of More and his followers. He writes:

Utópia pedig egy sziget, ahol mindezek a dolgok nem léteznek. Nem léteznek különbségek az emberek közt, sem politikai és vallási üldözés. Utópia a tökéletes állam, mint a Platóné. Nem első, s nem utolsó: az "utópisztikus" regények hosszú sora jön utána máig. Hol van Utópia? A neve azt mondja (görögül), hogy sehol. Mindig újra felmerül a láthatáron—és újra elsüllyed.⁶⁷¹

This thesis can concern itself only with those features of More's *Utopia*⁶⁷² that Babits utilised in *Elza pilóta*. The first is its narrative. Unlike the interchanging pattern of the war story and the story of science in the subchapters of Babits's work, More's *Utopia* has a framed narrative structure. It is a predecessor of Babits's *Elza pilóta* and many later utopias, however, by virtue of its complex narrative make-up. The author asks the editor, Peter Gilles, to verify his story with the help of Raphael. Peter Gilles sends it off to the publisher after having compared More's story to Raphael's credible account of the island. This device provides the fictional account with veracity. The main narrative is thus constructed from the accounts of different narrators.

It also has real places and non-places separated from each other on the one hand and merged together by the narrative on the other. Like its descendent transtext utopias, including Babits's, its narrative is structured by the overall theme of

⁶⁷⁰Babits, *Az európai irodalom története* (1979), pp. 54, 153.

⁶⁷¹'Utopia is an island where all these things do not exist. People are equal, and no one is persecuted because of their political beliefs or religion. Utopia is the perfect state such as Plato's. It is not the first and not the last either. It is followed by a long line of "utopian" novels up to the present time. Where is Utopia? Its name (in Greek) means nowhere. From time to time it appears on the horizon and then sinks again', Babits, *Az európai irodalom története* (1979), p. 153.

⁶⁷²The editions of *Utopia* I have used are Thomas More, *Utopia*, trans. and ed. Robert M. Adams (New York; London: W. W. Norton, 1992) and Thomas More, *Utopia* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978).

travelling, from, for example, a real place (England, Persia, Castile, the Holy Roman Empire and France) to a non-place (Utopia).

As in *Elza pilóta*, war is a subject of More's *Utopia*. It is a main issue not only in the real but also in the utopian context. It is discussed in principle in connection with the enclosures,⁶⁷³ the dominion of the French king and Utopia. More feels obliged to discuss why wars come about. He argues that the indirect cause of warfare is greed and private property. People who have been sacked because of the enclosures have to be put to good use otherwise they become criminals. The narrator maintains that war will only bring about further war in all cases. He professes that any way of avoiding war is more beneficial than fighting (an example of which is the advice given to the king of France.)⁶⁷⁴ The Utopians do not fight wars unless their friends or allies are hurt, or they are themselves attacked. They will tend to use mercenaries when they have to fight.⁶⁷⁵ Loyalty towards one another is their absolute prerogative on the battlefield. They are aware of the commandment 'Thou shalt not kill'.⁶⁷⁶ They do not favour capital punishment either. Only recalcitrant criminals can be executed.⁶⁷⁷

More's *Utopia* values rationality highly. Rationality is the basis of peaceful cooperation. It makes people morally wholesome.⁶⁷⁸ Thus he sees the reintegration of

⁶⁷³ 'Each greedy individual preys on his native land like a malignant growth, absorbing field after field, and enclosing thousands of acres with a single fence. Result—hundreds of farmers are evicted. They're either cheated or bullied into giving up their property, or systematically ill-treated until they're finally forced to sell', Thomas More, *Utopia* (1978), p. 47.

⁶⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

⁶⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 114.

⁶⁷⁶ 'God said, "Thou shalt not kill"—does the theft of a little money make it quite all right for us to do so? If it's said that this commandment applies only to illegal killing, what's to prevent human beings from similarly agreeing among themselves to legalize certain types of rape, adultery or perjury?', *ibid.*, p. 50.

⁶⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

⁶⁷⁸ Erasmus was against uniformity in *The Praise of Folly*. More's attitude is communistic and regards the moral improvement of mankind as vital. See Berneri, *Journey through Utopia* (1987), p. 62.

the individual and the political order as accomplished through rationality.⁶⁷⁹ His writing is a source of Babits's from the point of view that it regulates marriages and the number of family members. Children are married out, and owe obedience to their common parent. More's preoccupation with rationality will also be followed by Babits. Babits will regard this human faculty in nearly the opposite way, however. Reason is a source of peace and order in More. It is a means which serves striking cruelty in Babits.

The Utopians love learning and treasure the pleasures of the mind. They have few but good laws. They do not own private property in order to avoid resentment, greed and war. This is a paradox in More since he does not favour laws to start with.⁶⁸⁰ One must add that paradoxes are a characteristic feature of this genre. Paradox is a sophisticated device which makes people think.

The Utopians are humanely religious in the sense of believing in a higher metaphysical reality. This belief is, however, separate from the conduct of their life.

In More's *Utopia*, Raphael Hythlodæus's name consists of Raphael, meaning God's physician, salvation bringer, and Hythlodæus, that is, non-sense and learning, learned in non-sense.⁶⁸¹ The meaning of Hythlodæus undermines its bearer's credibility while that of Raphael refers to his medical profession associating him with Schulberg.

In connection with *Elza pilóta's* principal subject matter, *Utopia* takes nationhood and state for granted. Not only every nation, including especially the

⁶⁷⁹On the contrary, for More order in the temporal realm is the product of human reason alone, and it is sustained by those political institutions created by reasonable people who strive to make life within the worldly framework as orderly as possible', Donnelly, *Patterns of Order and Utopia* (1998), p. 76.

⁶⁸⁰Ibid., p. 66.

⁶⁸¹Ibid., p. 8.

French king's dominion, but also the Utopians favour their own kind, and view the world through the lens of their own group.

5.4.2 Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis* (1627)

The narrative of *New Atlantis* is also built up of the participants' conversations. The dialogues are between the imaginary narrator and a Bensalem magistrate or Alcaldorem. They are about what has passed between the crew and the Bengalis, the inhabitants of *New Atlantis*. This narrative, like More's and many of its followers, including *Elza Pilóta*, has an intermediary. This is the chaplain and publisher:

William Rawley, who explains what his lord, Francis Bacon, meant.⁶⁸²

Amongst others, H.G. Wells praised Bacon's work as the prime ancestor and example of a modern dynamic utopia whose dynamism⁶⁸³ is based on its scientific quality.⁶⁸⁴ One must mention that the dynamic quality⁶⁸⁵ of not only this work, but also its hypertext utopias, for example, Babits's and Wells's is the result not only of the scientific, but also of the dialogical⁶⁸⁶ open-ended narrative⁶⁸⁷. Babits admired Bacon.

⁶⁸² "This fable my Lord devised, to the end that he might explain therein a model or description of a college instituted for the interpreting of nature and the producing of great and marvellous works for the benefit of men, under the name of Solomon's House, or the College of the Six Days' Works", *Francis Bacon the Major Works including New Atlantis and the Essays*, ed. Brian Vickers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 785.

⁶⁸³ "Dynamics is the study of the behaviour of objects in motion, particularly of the behaviour of objects acted on by forces [...] Dynamics can be distinguished in this way from statics, which deals objects at rest or in a state of uniform motion", *Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Physics: General, Nuclear, Molecular, Chemical, Metal and Vacuum Physics Astronomy, Geophysics, Biophysics and related subjects*, ed., J. Thewlis, 12 vols. (Oxford, London, New York, Paris: Pergamon, 1961-1969), ii (1961), p. 547. Dynamism in literature is created by paradoxes, ideas that contradict each other and concepts that make us think. Dialogue is a good means of dynamism because it is a form of constant motion. The constant motion is achieved by statements which are reactions to what has been said previously. The dynamics of the responses make the mind work and thus set the readers' thoughts in motion.

⁶⁸⁴ Krishan Kumar, *Utopia and Anti-Utopia in Modern Times* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), p. 30.

⁶⁸⁵ 'The utopia of the ancient world is socially hierarchical, economically underdeveloped and static. The modern utopia is egalitarian, affluent and dynamic. Such a conception emerged under unique historical conditions', *ibid.*, p. 32.

⁶⁸⁶ 'The speeches of characters in a narrative or a play, especially the latter. [...] Modern novelists, relishing the directness and immediacy of dialogue, have made it prominent in their works till, in the

He praised him, together with other English philosophers, such as Berkeley, Hobbes, Hume,⁶⁸⁸ Locke,⁶⁸⁹ Swift, and Newton for power of observation. He included Voltaire in this august company as well. What all these thinkers had in common, according to Babits, is a kind of thinking that is free of clichés and prejudices, because it is based on thorough scientific observation.⁶⁹⁰ Rawley mentions in his preface to *New Atlantis* the careful description of the Bengalis' naval discoveries. He also informs the reader about their thorough observations of the geography and customs of other lands they have visited. Travel is thus the main theme of Bacon's story-line as well. More believed in the saving grace of rationality. Bacon put his trust in science and knowledge through experimentation⁶⁹¹. Babits rightly observed and appreciated Bacon's commitment to science.⁶⁹² In *New Atlantis* Bacon expressed the view that people can continually alter their attitudes, therefore conditions, by scientifically revising their views. This is the way science can lead people to a happier world.⁶⁹³ Babits will carry on with the investigation of the role of science but in his work science has not only a positive but also an alarmingly destructive role. It becomes the

stream-of-consciousness novel, they have produced a form made up almost entirely of the dialogue of the mind with itself', Karl Beckson and Arthur Ganz, *Literary Terms: A Dictionary*, 3rd edn. (London: Andre Deutsch, 1990), p. 61.

⁶⁸⁷ *A Modern Utopia* for example finishes with 'It is for you rather than me to say how this sketch map of mine lies with regard to your own more systematic cartography...', H. G. Wells, *Tono-Bungay and A Modern Utopia* (London: Odhams, n. d.), p. 504.

⁶⁸⁸ See footnotes 19 and 23.

⁶⁸⁹ See footnotes 18 and 22. Babits had John Locke, *The Philosophical Works*, ed. J. A. St. John (London, 1843) in his library.

⁶⁹⁰ *Az európai irodalom története* (1979), p. 208.

⁶⁹¹ A. L. Morton, *The English Utopia* (1952), p. 65.

⁶⁹² 'The ordered arrangement of ascertained knowledge, including the methods by which such knowledge and the criteria by which its truth is tested', Peter Walker, *Chambers Dictionary of Science and Technology* (Edinburgh and New York: Chambers, 1999), p. 1021. Natural philosophy is based on observation, and theoretical science on deduction. See *ibid.*, p. 1021. All utopias and anti-utopias are scientific. They show the logical consequences of applied moral principles and different kinds of human conduct. They also tend to take up science as a theme.

⁶⁹³ 'the whole point of Bacon's system of organizing knowledge was that it was not an end in itself, on the contrary, it was to serve as the foundation upon which to "establish progressive stages of certainty."', Donnelly, *Patterns of Order and Utopia* (1998), p. 93.

device of a totalitarian, monolithic and warring state.⁶⁹⁴

As in More, marriages are social affairs. Families are paternalistic, marriageable parties have to be chaste, and marriage is unbreakable. Both works are roots of *Elza pilóta* in which family life is also regulated. Babits is a follower of Bacon in the way that he does not wish for a classless society.⁶⁹⁵

Like More's *Utopia*, and later utopian works including Babits's *Elza pilóta*, Bacon's utopia also concerns itself with the issue of nationalism and cosmopolitanism. The way people conduct themselves in *New Atlantis* is utopian in the everyday sense of this word, implying that it is too good to be true. They are driven by pacifism, the thirst for knowledge, and charity. Unlike in the 'enemy's land' in *Elza pilóta*, the speakers find a common language, and a common spiritual denominator.

Apart from the openly professed Christianity of the natives and their visitors, *New Atlantis* is based on Old and New Testament themes and imagery.⁶⁹⁶ The strangers' exploration of Bensalem is in parallel with Genesis:

Yet we did lift up our hearts and voices to God above, who "showed his wonders in the deep;" beseeching him of his mercy, that as in the beginning he discovered the face of the deep, and brought forth dry land, so he would now discover land to us, that we might not perish.⁶⁹⁷ [...] God surely is manifested in this land.⁶⁹⁸

In this respect too, *Elza pilóta* is the opposite of Bacon's work. Indifference and cruelty takes the place of generosity and charity. Especially the subchapters of *Elza*

⁶⁹⁴This is also true in the case of many of H. G. Wells's, and other twentieth-century dystopias. See Ferns, *Narrating Utopia* (1999), p. 15.

⁶⁹⁵'Private property, money, and class are not abolished [...] Bacon never tires of describing sumptuous dresses, headgear, shoes, cloaks, jewels, and coaches', Berneri, *Journey through Utopia* (1987), p. 129.

⁶⁹⁶An example of from the Genesis and Psalms can be seen below. Other Biblical sources cited in *New Atlantis* are Matthew (6:33) and Luke (12:3); Genesis (19:8) and Kings (17:8): Francis Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning and New Atlantis*, ed. Arthur Johnston (Oxford: Clarendon, 1974), pp., 222, 236.

⁶⁹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 214.

⁶⁹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 219.

pilóta show us a world where man takes the place of the creator: ‘—És mégis: nagy az Ember!—folytatta a tudós.—Nincs többé titok előtte, s megérett arra, hogy teremtsen, mint az Isten’.⁶⁹⁹ The scientist’s biography is also compared to the Book of Genesis by Professor Schulberg: ‘Kevés embernek adatott meg jelen lenni egy világ születésénél s átélni a teremtés hat napját’.⁷⁰⁰ Babits concludes *Elza pilóta* by showing the outcome of the utopian belief that man can replace God. The scientist escapes from death in the ‘real’ world and dies in space. Professor Schulberg suffocates. He dies in despair because he realises that he was the god of an amoral world.

5.4.3 Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver’s Travels* (1726)

Babits reconsiders several themes and devices of *Gulliver’s Travels* in his writing. As he himself admitted, *Elza pilóta* is a hypertext of Swift’s work.⁷⁰¹ Like in many other utopias, dialogues are a dominant feature of the narration in *Gulliver’s Travels*. This work by Jonathan Swift also has an extra narrative dimension which not only has its origin in its above mentioned precursors, but is also followed by Babits. As I have already mentioned, dialogue is an important characteristic of utopia and dystopia because it is part of the open-ended quality of this genre. It not only challenges the mind, but also invites participation.⁷⁰² Gulliver’s journal (narrative) is presented as cut and transformed by his publisher, Richard Sympson. Thus it has one final

⁶⁹⁹ ‘—And yet: Man is great!—the scientist continued.—Nothing is a secret for him and he is ready to create like a God’, *Elza pilóta* (1982), p. 540.

⁷⁰⁰ ‘It is the privilege of the very few to be present at the birth of a universe and live through the six days of creation’, *ibid.*, p. 582.

⁷⁰¹ See Babits on Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* in *Az európai irodalom története* (1979), pp. 200–4. Remember also that Babits compared his work to Swift’s in one of the last interviews he gave on his own novel. I used *The Writings of Jonathan Swift*, ed. Robert A. Greenberg and William B. Piper (New York; London: W. W. Norton, 1973).

⁷⁰² ‘utopian narrative, by virtue of its origins, is *inherently* dialogic, even dialectical, inviting readers into active participation of the text, rather than relegating them to the status of passive observers’, Ferns, *Narrating Utopia* (1999), p. 23.

intermediary, the supreme editor-narrator.

The narrative of travelling is another utopian feature of *Gulliver's Travels* which Babits applies. In reconsidering relativity and changing of scales through travel in *Elza pilóta*, only the story and manner of Babits's prose makes Babits's work different from Swift's. Gulliver is not only a giant in Lilliput, and a dwarf in Brobdingnag, but he changes his views of existence as well. In the different worlds, and through the changes of his size and importance in the social hierarchy, Gulliver continually changes not only his views of the surrounding world, but also his opinion of his own character. The use of relative scale has similar roles in *Elza pilóta*. It provides an extra perspective in which Elza, the scientist and Professor Schulberg can view themselves and their world. The created world of science into which both the scientist and, later, Professor Schulberg would like to escape is a 'small' universe. Unlike in *Gulliver's Travels*, where Gulliver can freely cross the boundaries between different worlds, people cannot do the same in *Elza pilóta*. Should they attempt to cross either the front-line or the sphere of their own world, they will never be able to return to the previous one. This makes Babits's work less playful than *Gulliver's Travels*. Only death and the elimination of all existing worlds can resolve their status.

Though it has a less principal role than in Bacon's *New Atlantis*, Babits's *Elza pilóta*, and some of H. G. Wells's works, science is also one of the many themes in *Gulliver's Travels*. The scientists on the island are like Plato's Guardians. The truly humane scientist in the subchapters of *Elza pilóta* is like them only in relation to his own world of creation. Professor Schulberg also has the same kind of superiority as they have. He is like Swift's scientists. Marianne's father is far more benignly humane than they are. Both of these characters in *Elza pilóta*, however, have a root in

Swift's work. Astronomy⁷⁰³ is a minor theme in *Gulliver's Travels*, while it has a major function in the stories by Bacon, H. G. Wells, and Babits.

As in More's *Utopia* and Bacon's *New Atlantis*, war is a central theme in Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*. Babits and H. G. Wells not only continued with this preoccupation but also based many of their works on it. One does not need to comment on Swift's view of human nature in *Gulliver's Travels*. It is enough to remember the constant internal war in Lilliput, and Lilliput's constant war with Blefescu over trivial matters which is symbolised by the parable of the egg. The vileness with which Gulliver is used is another illustration of cruelty. The way Gulliver contentedly bends what he has to say about his own kind, and the concluding answer of the king of Brobdingnag:—'I cannot but conclude the Bulk of your Natives, to be the most pernicious Race of little odious Vermin that Nature ever suffered to crawl upon the Surface of the Earth'.⁷⁰⁴—also indicates a harsh judgement on war-fighting man.⁷⁰⁵

War is discussed again according to the Renaissance topic of 'The Art of War'⁷⁰⁶ in the Houyhnhnms's country. At this stage Gulliver's attitude has changed a great deal compared to his previous behaviour in Brobdingnag. He talks about the violence and destructiveness of the war fought by his own kind less proudly and with sounder judgement than previously, in either book II or III. The description of the spirit of the School of Political Projectors⁷⁰⁷ in book III is a precursor of Verme's

⁷⁰³On the emblematic use and image of the comet see, for example: *The Writings of Jonathan Swift* (1973), book III, pp. 143-44.

⁷⁰⁴*Ibid.*, p. 108.

⁷⁰⁵See perhaps one of the best known parts of *Gulliver's Travels* in *ibid.*, II, vi, pp. 107-08.

⁷⁰⁶See more on this in Howard Erskine-Hill, *Swift, Gulliver's Travels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

⁷⁰⁷See *The Writings of Jonathan Swift* (1973), book III: chapter vi, pp. 159-64 mainly on the nature of internal British politics.

regime in *Elza pilóta*. In book IV Gulliver tells the Houyhnhnms about the cruel nature of fighting. He deems this characteristic to be typical of his own kind. His speech is an outcry and warning.⁷⁰⁸ Babits's work will copy this device and its function. The haughty and dignified Houyhnhnms do not, however, question either conceptions such as the extermination of 'brutes', or their own self-allocated stance of superiority. Their completely artificial behaviour, their impersonal, immaterial and purely conceptual cold 'warring' is equally frightening as the naturalistic and animate descriptions of human wars. They could well have served as a model for Elza because of Elza's indifference that makes her kill without sentiment. Another utilisation of Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* in *Elza pilóta* is the way the qualities of the Yahoos and the Houyhnhnms are shown in Elza's and Dezső's relationship by Babits. Elza is unable to tolerate Dezső's nature despite his affectionate devotedness to her. In this sense she is, again, like Swift's horses—contemptuous and superior—and she sentences her boyfriend to death. Chris Ferns rightly observes that the characterisation of sexual behaviour is often a displacement of a political stance.⁷⁰⁹ A direct lift from the Houyhnhnms's relation to the world by Babits is when Elza flies the 'enemy's plane' and finds 'her old home-land' astonishing.

Both Swift's and then Babits's utopias describe aspects of the darkest sides of human behaviour. Swift's is the more detailed, complex, and abstract analysis of this subject while Babits's is more tied to an expression of mood. Babits's disillusionment is a result of his judgement on what took place around him. Both works, however, function as warnings.

Finally, one must recognise a preoccupation with morality and ethics in both

⁷⁰⁸Ibid., pp. 212-17.

⁷⁰⁹Ferns, *Narrating Utopia* (1999), p. 125.

Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* and its hypertext, Babits's *Elza pilóta*. This focus might also be another reason why Babits said that his utopia had something Swifitean in it. *Gulliver's Travels* and *Elza pilóta* both have consistently applied morals which maintain a system of values all through the ingeniously changing perspectives of their stories. I am not sure to what extent the ideological background of these works is Christian, but neither work lacks the values of Christianity and both are adamantly unbiased.

5.4.4 Samuel Butler's *Erewhon*

Babits knew Samuel Butler's *Erewhon* (1872). One can find his views on it in his *Az európai irodalom története*:

Ez teljességgel swifti. Az *Erewhon* egy új *Gulliver*, mely a viktoriánus ideálok relativitását leplezi le. Butler szkeptikus mindennel szemben ami "modern": erkölcs, evolúció, részvétel és haladás... Erő és erkölcs, egészség és kötelesség helyet cserélnek az ő világában. Ez már az "értékek átértékelése".⁷¹⁰

As in the utopias discussed above, one can find most of the main features of this genre in Butler's writing. Its narrative is slightly exceptional in that it has only one narrator who is both editor and author. The relatively simple narration, however, serves the same purpose as the complex kind in other utopias. It aims to make the story convincing. As in other works, travel and discovery are main features of *Erewhon*. These include the description of real lands and non-lands. The contrast between reality and a fantastical world serves to show what the author deems as wrong in his own environment. Thus it is a means by which Butler expresses his

⁷¹⁰ "This is an entirely Swifitean satire. The *Erewhon* is a new *Gulliver*, which reveals the relativity of "Victorian" ideals. Butler is sceptical of everything which is "modern": ethics, evolution, sympathy, and progress... Power and morals, health and obligation change places in his world. This is really "the revaluation of values", *Az európai irodalom története* (1979), p. 427.

moral principles. In other aspects, *Erewhon* bears little resemblance to the other works and Babits's *Elza pilóta*. It is a counter-version⁷¹¹ of all its predecessors, and *Elza pilóta* is in turn a counter-version and transtext of *Erewhon*.

Butler's work is the illustration of a value-system that comes full circle. It arrives pretty much where it starts from. Its clever rules and systems provide a way to circumvent matters which they are supposed to alleviate, solve or prevent. Examples of this are the banks; food-consumption; the birth-rights of children; the conviction of criminals; and even the strict social agreement on marriage laws. The way in which *Erewhon* is run resembles an anti-version of the Utopian land of More's *Utopia*, which aims to base the concepts of an ideal society on a few unambiguous laws. It is different from *Elza pilóta* too, in the way that it is not a dystopia warning against the worst sides of human nature, but a sophisticated satire of laws, institutions, conventions and customs. As a conclusion of all its arguments, the Erwhonians get round their strictest and most constricting laws to bring about happiness.

It is worth observing that while *Erewhon*⁷¹² can be read almost as a sweet fairy-tale, Babits's and Swift's utopias are more like anti-tales. The true lovers finally get home in *Erewhon*. Love affairs that come to bind people do not exist in *Elza pilóta*. With the exception of Elza, people all die as a result of bombing or in an airless vacuum. Both works are, however, utopias. Like all utopias below and above, they contemplate morals, values and contemporary value judgements. In *Erewhon* the assessment of values comes mostly full circle in a way that nothing ever goes really

⁷¹¹*Erewhon* is a pragmatic counter-version of a utopia since it makes conventional utopia meaningless because values and the lack of values in *Erewhon* make no difference in the assessment of society and its conduct. The pragmatic dimension of communication is the idealised and actualised use of language or in this case literary genres. See *Translation Theory and Practise: A Discourse and Computational Perspective*, ed. Paul Rowlett (Salford: European Studies Research Institute, 1994), p. 15.

⁷¹²Samuel Butler, *Erewhon* (Ware: Wordsworth, 1996). As background reading I found J. C. Garrett's *Hope or Disillusion* (Canterbury: University of Canterbury Publications Committee, 1984) useful.

wrong or is believed to go wrong. Swift satirizes the negative aspects of human nature, but can change his perspective playfully. In *Elza pilóta*, however, the things that are described as going wrong do go wrong irretrievably. As I have already observed, this attitude has the function of showing humanity the alarmingly destructive potential in their nature. This way *Elza pilóta* highlights the same positive values as Bacon's and More's utopias, *Gulliver's Travels* and *Erewhon*. The consistently applied moral stance strengthens the admonitory quality of all dystopias, including Babits's.

5.4.5 Edgar Allan Poe

Before finally considering Babits's authorial kinship with H. G. Wells, I must devote some attention to Edgar ^{li}Alan Poe's role in inspiring *Elza pilóta*. As I have already mentioned in connection with *A gólyakalifa*, the young Babits was an avid reader and translator of Poe's works. Evidence for this are *A gólyakalifa*; Babits's short-stories: 'Karácsonyi Madonna' (1909), 'Mese a Decameronból' (1910), 'Novella az emberi húsról és csontokról' (1913), 'Ilus csodanapja' (1915), 'A torony árnyéka' (1920), 'Dzsonni, a tengerész' (1923);⁷¹³ Babits's verse,⁷¹⁴ and numerous references Babits makes to Poe either in his essays⁷¹⁵ or in his *Az európai irodalom története*. Though Poe's works are rarely regarded as conventional utopias, Poe's inspirational role in the case of *Elza pilóta* is remarkable. The symmetrical and strictly structured narrative; descriptions of landscapes and imagery; scientific themes and fantastical

⁷¹³Mihály Babits novellái és színjátékai, ed. Anna Beliané Sándor (Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1987), 34-39, 50-62, 73-79, 88-101, 177-186, 261-274.

⁷¹⁴See footnote 78.

⁷¹⁵Babits admired Poe's mathematical talent, his expertise of composing and the structural symmetry in his compositions. See 'Oidipusz király' and 'Az irodalom elmélete' among the Babits essays. Mihály Babits, *Esszék és tanulmányok* (1978), i, pp. 206, 622, 636.

elements, and an end-of-the-world mood are the proofs of *Elza pilóta*'s roots in Poe.

Thus the devices of Babits's *Elza pilóta* have their origin in *The Unparalleled Adventure of One Hans Pfaall*⁷¹⁶ and the *Narrative of A. Gordon Pym*.⁷¹⁷ As in Babits's novel, both of these texts have double narrative sources. The first piece even contains the themes of other planets, and of aviation.

The narrator of *Hans Pfaall* begins by referring to hearsay in Rotterdam and quotes from a letter that is alleged to have been dropped by its writer from a balloon passing behind a cloud. The writer of this letter, Hans Pfaall, disappeared from the city five years ago. His letter recounts how Hans Pfaall built his balloon, and the considerations that led him to take his trip to the moon. It gives precise data not only about the Moon and the relationship of the Earth and the Moon but also about laws of aviation. It discusses the use of tools such as his barometer. It even provides a bird's eye view of the world. Hans Pfaall's description of the world from above is just as scientifically precise as his description of his balloon-building, his process of flying, and that of the planet he has visited. After the signed close of the journal, the narrator finishes by referring again to hearsay and to different reactions to the journal. These observations, though often scientific, neither accept nor refute the story. The note at the end of the piece ponders the credibility of other stories about journeys to the Moon. Finally, however, the narrator praises Hans Pfaall's description for its faithful rendering of scientific principles.

The scientific theme in *The Unparalleled Adventure of Hans Pfaall* is likely to be another root of *Elza pilóta*. The use of tools, that of the natural world and the

⁷¹⁶'The Unparalleled Adventures of Hans Pfaall', in *The Complete Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe* (1982), pp. 3-41.

⁷¹⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 748-883.

cosmos are imagery in both Poe's and Babits's works. The central subject matter, flying, allows the narrator to view the world in an unusual perspective in both pieces. The scientific method of description, based on the precisely detailed observation of natural laws, serves to make the fantastic real and credible in both Poe's and Babits's works. This device, again, encourages people to think. Poe's story is more tightly argued than Babits's. It also carries an extra note in the end. Both narratives, however, are symmetrical in a similar way, and their symmetry is based on their double, even triple narratives.

Like *The Unparalleled Adventure of Hans Pfaall*, the *Narrative of A. Gordon Pym* has a double and symmetrical narrative. It begins with the narrator's own introduction to his narrative, and finishes by the editor's comments on the narrator's manuscript, parallel to the way Schulberg takes over from the scientist. In addition to the double and symmetrical structure of the narrative, the inner narrative of this piece also contains descriptions of travelling. Although the theme of this piece is not principally scientific, its style is similarly objective as that of *Hans Pfaall* and *Elza pilóta*. Even in *The Narrative of A. Gordon Pym* one must, however, notice the scientific themes. These include not only the assessments of mental states—chapter ii—but also the cognitive observations of reactions to certain situations, an example of which is chapter viii. The descriptions of sailing and discoveries, as one can find them in chapter xvi, are also scientific subjects.

One can read most of Poe's works as if they were utopias, because of their objective fantasticality. This piece even contains an inner utopia within the overall narrative of travelling. The role of this inset is similar to that of the scientist of the small planet in *Elza pilóta*. In addition to its utopian quality, and its inserted position, it also has themes that Babits utilised in his novel, namely human nature, wars,

aggression and crime. The way the visitors are treated by the natives of the black land⁷¹⁸ demonstrates the worst side of human nature. The final key sentence of the novel proposes retaliation as well.⁷¹⁹ The difference between Babits's novel and this piece is that Babits does not analyse the bad side of human nature to the same depth, but shows its consequences in the state of the devastated planet. Babits's preoccupations and wording in *Elza pilóta* create a transtext of Poe's works. The endings of *Elza pilóta* and *The Narrative of A. Gordon Pym*, inter alia, are equally distressful. They both inform the reader posthumously of even the narrator's death.

Certain parts of *The Narrative of A. Gordon Pym* are dominant roots of a few episodes in Babits's work. One of these is after the first ship-wreck when Augustus hides Arthur in the hold of the *Grampus*:

This circumstance occasioned me great disquietude; for connecting it with the disorder of mind I experienced upon awakening, I began to suppose that I must have slept for an inordinately long time. The close atmosphere of the hold might have something to do with this, and might, in the end, be productive of the most serious results. My head ached excessively; I fancied that I drew every breath with difficulty; and in short, I was oppressed with a multitude of gloomy feelings. [...] In this attempt my great feebleness became more than ever apparent. It was with the utmost difficulty I could crawl along at all, and very frequently my limbs sank suddenly from beneath me; when, falling prostrate on my face, I would remain for some minutes in a state bordering on insensibility.⁷²⁰

Its hypertext in Babits's work:

Elza szédülten állt ott és vakon az émelygéstől s szemének fájásától, a fájó vas és zúzott kő szörnyű csikorgásában. [...] A levegő csakugyan fullasztó volt, majdnem kibírhatatlan. A nedves por szinte behavazta ruhájukat, mintha csokoládéesőben jártak volna. [...] Én sohse fogok a levegőre jutni... Itt fogok megfulladni... [...] Így fulladunk meg... agyonnyom a föld... és mindig csak ezeket a nedves, undok földfalakat látjuk magunk körül... folyton érezzük magunkban, hogy fognak majd hidegen, puhán összelapítani... mert itt van idő erről elmélkedni... egyebet sem lehet

⁷¹⁸Babits's reformulation and assimilation of Poe's work in this instance is obvious in *Fekete ország* (1908). See *Babits Mihály összegyűjtött versei* (1997), pp. 51-2.

⁷¹⁹'I have graven it within the hills, and my vengeance upon the dust within the rock'.

⁷²⁰*The Complete Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe* (1982), pp. 762, 765.

tenni ebben a lármában, ebben a ködben, ebben a sötétben...⁷²¹

The description of Arthur's mental and physical state in the ship's hold and that of Elza's health in the underground tunnels on the front are undoubtedly similar. The metaphorical means that describe their experience are also alike. The expression of claustrophobia in both narratives, and the settings encompassing conventional metaphors of the underworld in Western culture are also similar. It is, nevertheless, not only the depiction of Elza's state in the war tunnels that transforms descriptions of what happens in the *Grampus*'s hold, but also that of the underground shelter.

Claustrophobia is prevalent in the shelter. Aida's story in Babits's narrative must have been surely inspired by Poe's narrative as well. This is shown primarily in the wording. The dogs behave similarly and what happens to them is also alike. The way the description of their behaviour expresses their animal nature is also similar. An extract from the source text in Poe:

He was lying close by the door of the box, snarling fearfully, although in a kind of undertone, and grinding his teeth as if strongly convulsed. I had no doubt whatever that the want of water or the confined atmosphere of the hold had driven him mad, and I was at a loss what course to pursue.⁷²²

Its hypertext from Babits:

Aida egyenesen nekiment egy őrszemnek, aki egy csukott ajtó előtt állt.—Fogja meg János bácsi!—süvöltötték a szolgák az őrszem felé. Így esett végre foglyul Aida. Harapott, kapálózott, három ember is kellett, míg kezeikkel lenyűgözve ártalmatlanná teheték.⁷²³

⁷²¹ 'Elza felt sick and blinded through being dizzy. Her eyes were in pain amidst the screeching sound of aching iron and stone debris. [...] The air was really suffocating; almost unbearable. Wet dust covered their clothes as if it snowed and they were walking in a rain of melted chocolate. [...] I will never get out to get some fresh air... I will suffocate here... [...] We will suffocate... will be crushed by the wet earth... and will still only see these wet disgusting walls of earth around us... we cannot cease feeling how they will flatten us out cold and softly ... because we have time to ponder here... in fact pondering is the only thing one can do in this din, fog and darkness', *Elza pilóta* (1982), pp. 623-24.

⁷²² *The Complete Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe* (1982), pp. 771-72.

⁷²³ 'Aida ran straight into a guard who stood in front of a closed door. Catch her, uncle John!—the servants screamed at the guard. This is how she was captured. She bit and kicked. Three men had to hold her down to put an end to her', *Elza pilóta* (1982), p. 514.

The narrator's detachment from what is described, and the protagonists' reactions to their observations about what is happening around them is also similar. It is, again, expressed in the same way as well. A subtle distinction between Poe's and Babits's characters is that Babits's people remain less excited than, for example, Poe's boys. Babits's protagonists become professionals in war, while Poe's heroes 'only' experience the dark side of existence, animal and human nature.

Babits utilised many more features from Poe. I will here discuss two short-stories which typify Poe's outstanding inspirational role in the creation of *Elza pilóta*. One of these is *A Descent into the Maelstrom*.⁷²⁴ As in *Elza pilóta*, one can again see the mystical approach to nature characterised by scientific objectivity in the description of a partly fantastic, partly real natural phenomenon. As in *Elza pilóta*, the description of a catastrophic natural phenomenon in this piece is made believable by the narrator's scientific approach. Like in *Elza pilóta*, the scientific observations in this story are in parallel with the narrator's dialogic account of events that divides the story-line into parts.

The other short story by Poe I would like to mention is *Manuscript Found in a Bottle*. Apart from the theme of travelling, and the function of travelling in the narrative of other Poe stories and of *Elza pilóta*, one encounters here the same phenomena of natural philosophy as in Babits's novel. Just as in the other Poe short-stories mentioned above, the description of natural surroundings here and in *Elza pilóta* are in parallel with the characters' mental states. Another feature of Poe's work that Babits transformed is the narrative form of the journal and the central role of a bottled manuscript. A piece of work in a bottle is cast away by its author who is about

⁷²⁴See Edgar Allan Poe, *Selected Writings* (1984), pp. 225-43.

to die. The manuscript is thus left to its own fate in both pieces of fiction. The order of the manuscript's writing in Poe is in parallel with the events that lead to the narrator's death. The same applies to the scientist of the small planet, and to Schulberg. The only difference between the implementation of Poe's story and that of *Elza pilóta* is that the two narrators, the person of the scientist and Schulberg, and their allegedly distinct manuscripts, are merged at the end of the overall narrative in Babits's work, while Poe's work is an unequivocal tale by a single story-teller.

5.4.6 Herbert George Wells

Babits's library list and the interviews made with him show that he took a fair interest in H. G. Wells and in the philosophy of his works.⁷²⁵ Babits wrote,

A lehetőségek felé látszott fordulni H. G. Wells érdeklődése is. Mindjárt kezdettől, mert a tudományos fantasztikum és utópikus "anticipáció" érdekes játékaival kezdte [...] Fantasztikumában eleinte szigorú volt és egzakt, akár Poe; s az ő egzakttsága mögött nem settenkedett a Poe démona. A józanság a szabad játékból hamarosan haszonra szánt és tervezgető utópiákba vitte; majd praktikus társadalomkritikába. [...] Valóságos típusa lett a zsrnalisztikus írónak, aki a haladásról ábrándozik, álmokat sző a tömeg helyett és a tömeg szája ízére, népszerű elgondolásait olcsó szépirodalmi formába öltöztetve.⁷²⁶

This quote from Babits reveals most of the similarities and differences between H. G. Wells's works, and Babits's *Elza pilóta*. One significant similarity is that both wrote utopias which consider options of existence and society. Chris Ferns

⁷²⁵ According to Gál, Babits's brother said that Babits loved Wells—*Babits és az angol irodalom* (Debrecen, 1942) p. 22.—but his wife said that he could not stand him (p. 23.). The comments Babits makes in his *Az európai irodalom története* and essays, as well as the great number of Wells's works in Babits's library show that Babits appreciated Wells's fiction.

⁷²⁶ 'H. G. Wells also turned his attention towards possibilities. Right from the start he dealt with science-fiction, and with fascinating games of utopian 'anticipations'. [...] Like Poe, he was strict and precise in his fantasticality, but his fantasticality was free from Poe's demonic quality. Sobriety led him from free play to beneficial and planning utopias, and then on to practical social criticism. [...] He became the prototype of a journalistic writer, who dreamt of progress, conceived ideals on behalf of the masses, and put ideals into the mouth of the masses in a way that he clothed his literary principles in popular literary forms', *Az európai irodalom története* (1979), pp. 454-55.

quotes Fry about utopian stories:

The story is made up largely of a Socratic dialogue between guide and narrator, in which the narrator asks questions or thinks up objections and the guide answers them... As a rule the guide is completely identified with his society and seldom admits any discrepancy between the reality and the appearance of what he is describing.⁷²⁷

Like most of the above-mentioned utopia writers and Babits, many of H. G. Wells's works are dominated by the theme of travelling. Both Babits's novel and H. G.

Wells's works concern themselves with society; problems of war, and the future of mankind. Another central issue in all these novels is the role science and culture have played in the development of human civilisation.⁷²⁸ Babits was more interested in human nature than H. G. Wells, and H. G. Wells was more keen on giving his stories the aura of a romance, but they both had a full panoramic vision of history and of the earth's civilisation. They both aimed to express their ambivalent attitudes towards progress. I, nevertheless, find H. G. Wells's works more optimistic and often more essayistic than *Elza pilóta*.

The H. G. Wells novels I will compare to Babits's *Elza pilóta* on the basis of the above described similarities, can be divided into novels of behaviour, novels of conflict and civilisation and a modern romance.

5.4.6.1 Novels of behaviour

One of the best known novels by H. G. Wells is *The Time Machine*.⁷²⁹ Like *Elza pilóta*, this novel has a double narrative. It contains the same dynamic role of science

⁷²⁷Ferns, *Narrating Utopia* (L. U. P., 1999), p. 13.

⁷²⁸They were interested in the same authors whose works they both used as sources. H. G. Wells read Plato's *Republic* in Miss Fetherstonhaugh's home in Up Park Sussex where he could borrow books from the family library. Lovat Dickson, *H. G. Wells: His Turbulent Life and Times* (Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1972), p. 24.

⁷²⁹A good edition I used in order to read and study the following three novels is H. G. Wells, *The Science Fiction* (London: J. M. Dent, 1995), p. 1.

as a story-line composing theme that H. G. Wells commented on in his appraisal of Bacon, and Babits mentioned when commenting on both Bacon and H.G. Wells. Though differently than in *Elza pilóta*, the scientific theme is also part of an account of the universal history of the world. The narrator travels with the help of his machine. His travel encompasses the history of the world which provides a disillusioning view of human civilisation and culture, such as the one the reader encounters in Babits's novel.

Apart from science, and the dynamic and relativising role of science, both *The Time Machine* and *Elza pilóta* are preoccupied with human nature and social behaviour. In H. G. Wells's novel the Morlocks and the Eloi are just as strongly separated by a strict social hierarchy, as people in *Elza pilóta*. The Eloi in *The Time Machine* and Professor Schulberg as well as Elza in *Elza pilóta* have their origins in the Guardians and the Philosopher-king in Plato's *Republic*. Elza's mother is most similar to the Eloi. She is a sensitive person who feels for others. Like them, she is unfit to survive. Elza is a potential Eloi, but rather than choosing this form of existence, she goes to war. Thus she survives in a world that is doomed to die.

As opposed to the finer sensibilities of the Eloi who are unfit for life, the insensitive representatives of human nature are brutal and repulsive. H. G. Wells shows his revulsion of this phenomenon in the Morlocks. Babits shows his disgust not only in Vermes's figure, but also in Elza's disillusion with what she perceives as a beast in Dezső.

Another interesting parallel is the description of the underground existence of the Morlocks and the soldiers of the war as well as the population of the air-raid shelter in *Elza pilóta*. The characteristics of all these spheres are equally repulsive, and, to a civilised state of mind, horrible. H. G. Wells's words about the Morlocks:

The Morlocks at any rate were carnivorous. Even at the time, I remember wondering what large animal could have survived to furnish the red joint I saw. It was all very indistinct: the heavy smell, the big unmeaning shapes, the obscene figures lurking in the shadows, and only waiting for the darkness to come at me again! Then the match burned down, and stung my fingers, and fell, a wriggling red spot in the blackness.⁷³⁰

Vermes's and Elza's rather one-sided conversation in *Babits*:

Tudni, hogy ölök, hogy a magaméhoz hasonló életet öltök ki! ... [...] Lehet-e nagyobb gyönyöre a hatalomnak? Nem minden kor adta meg ezt a szenzációt mindenkinek... Hátha még az ember láthatná mindig, akit megöl, végignézhethé kínjait... Ha egy bajtársam kiszenved mellettem, arra gondolok, így hal meg az is, akit az én golyóm ért, és akármennyire sajnálom is, be kell vallanom...
-Pfuj! Vadállati dolog! Szakította meg Elza, nem állhatva.
-Az ember vadállat—felelt az idegen, tárgyilagosan.—⁷³¹

Poe's already introduced descriptions of 'underground' existence, could have most likely served as hypotext for H. G. Wells and *Babits*, and also for *Babits* through H. G. Wells. These quotations from *The Time Machine* and *Elza Pilóta*, however, express a deep disillusion with humankind. The narrator of H. G. Wells creates a visually disgusting image of man. *Babits*'s fiction shows one of its character's unscrupulous cruelty which astounds his morally wholesome partner. The former one's indifferent reaction to the latter's compassion shows up Vermes's wickedness in an even stronger light. Both authors express their disgust with mankind with different means. H. G. Wells relies on a visual effect, and *Babits* on reason.

Despite all these common pre-occupations, themes, conventions and the credible quality of the fantastical, the main difference between *Babits* and Wells, is that while the terrible vision of utopia in *The Time Machine* ends in a club, and remains classifiable as a story, *Babits*'s novel ends with the depiction of a devastated

⁷³⁰Ibid., pp. 48-49.

⁷³¹'To be aware of the fact that I kill and put an end to a life such as mine... [...] Can power give more delight? Not all ages have given this sensation to everyone. ... I only wish one could always see the person one kills and their sufferings... When a comrade of mine dies close by me, I always think that the enemy who is killed by my bullet dies the same way and however sorry I am, I must admit...-Phu! It is a beastly thing!—Elza interrupted him unintentionally.—Man is a beast.—The stranger replied objectively', *Elza pilóta* (1982), pp. 569-70.

universe, and the death of the narrators.

In most of H. G. Wells's novels one finds the same features that I have outlined above in the analysis of *The Time Machine* and *Elza pilóta*. *The Island of Doctor Moreau*⁷³² is, for example, also a dynamic dialogue-based utopia due to its scientific, credibly fantastical theme. Travelling is a dominant sub-theme of science. Biological and scientific themes are also a central subjects of this novel. A moral deficiency in mankind is the consequence of the over-dominance of rationality here as well. The scientist doctor in *Doctor Moreau* could well be a descendant of Raphael Hythlodæus, and a predecessor of Professor Schulberg. Only the task Professor Schulberg performs in *Elza pilóta* is different from that of Doctor Moreau in *The Island of Doctor Moreau*. While Professor Schulberg mutilates people to make them survive, Doctor Moreau tries to make human creatures out of animals. Social engineering is a characteristic feature of many utopias and dystopias.⁷³³ The idea of interference with the natural process of life calls people's attention to the qualities of their own lives. Moreau's thoughts about the animal qualities of his creatures are akin to Elza's in connection with Vermes and her boyfriend:

And least satisfactory of all is something that I cannot touch, somewhere I cannot determine where—in the seat of the emotions. Cravings, instincts, desires that harm humanity, a strange hidden reservoir to burst suddenly and inundate the whole being of the creature with anger, hate, or fear. These creatures of mine seemed strange and uncanny to you as soon as you began to observe them, they seem to be indisputable human beings. It's afterwards as I observe them that the persuasion fades. First one animal trait, then another, creeps to the surface and stares out at me ... But I will conquer yet.⁷³⁴

Both Professor Schulberg and Doctor Moreau exercise a Frankensteinian, or in a way

⁷³²H. G. Wells, *The Science Fiction* (London: J. M. Dent, 1995).

⁷³³Ferns, *Narrating Utopia* (1999), p. 68.

⁷³⁴H. G. Wells, *The Island of Doctor Moreau: A Critical Text of the 1896 London First Edition*, 2nd edn., ed. Leon Stover (North Carolina and London: McFarland, 1996), p. 146.

God-like role in their attempts to intervene in the process of life. (It is worth mentioning that both scientists experiment in Zoological gardens.) The scientist of the small planet is also a transposition of their type. In both the universe of *The Island of Doctor Moreau* and in that of *Elza pilóta*, all these God-like doctor-scientist figures must fail. They also die. Failing is meant not only in the literal sense but also in the sense that they can neither transform animals into humans by trying to over-rationalise them, nor can they re-create the world, or save people by mutilation in a world that is doomed to die. A principal difference in the ending of Babits's and H. G. Wells's novel is that while Babits's finishes with the scientist-doctors' deaths, H. G. Wells keeps alive Pendrick. Despite his utter loneliness, he still carries on experimenting. Thus and, again, despite the similarly terrible preoccupations of both Babits's and H. G. Wells's novels, H. G. Wells's novel finishes on a sad and yet more positive note than *Elza pilóta*.

*The First Man in the Moon*⁷³⁵ has all the above described thematic and formal conventions in common with *Elza pilóta*. The theme of a cosmic voyage dominates the story of the dynamic, scientific and dialogic narrative which makes the credible fantastic and the fantastic credible. Another common feature of this novel with Plato's *Republic*, other H. G. Wells's novels, and Babits's novel, is the strict hierarchy shown in the society of the Selenites. The civilisation of the Selenites, a transposition of that of the Houyhnhnms, is totalitarian, cold, inimical, and shows, again, the dominance of rationality over all else.

These beings with big heads, on whom the intellectual labours fall, form a sort of aristocracy in this strange society [...] They fall into three main classes differing greatly in influence and respect. There are the administrators, of whom Phi-oo is one, Selenites of considerable initiative and versatility, responsible each for a certain cubic

⁷³⁵H. G. Wells, *The Science Fiction* (1995).

content of the moon's bulk; the experts like the football-headed thinker, who are trained to perform certain special operations and the erudites who are the repositories of all knowledge.⁷³⁶

The human protagonist, Cavor, cannot survive amongst them. The end of this novel, the motifs of dream and barren space are again akin to Babits's ending of *Elza pilóta*.

It must well have been another of *Elza pilóta*'s hypotext:

and being forced backwards step by step out of all speech or sign of his fellows, for evermore into the Unknown—into the dark, into that silence that has no end...⁷³⁷

... *A kisérd szinte teljesen kihalt már. Egyedül vagyok a sívár, végtelen úrben. A levegő kimerült... Fulladozom.*⁷³⁸

Though it uses means different from those of *Elza pilóta*, this novel is also about animosity and cold war. Apart from *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, it is probably one of the least optimistic among the H. G. Wells novels that I have selected on the basis of their similarity to *Elza pilóta*. The final message of both these works, however, is less dark, bitter and pessimistic than Babits's *Elza pilóta*. J. A. V. Chapple discusses the roots of this phenomenon. He includes another source that is *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, as well as other preoccupations of Babits, previously discussed in connection with *A gólyakalifa*:

The balance between fantastic myth and reality is different in all these works, yet they all express feelings of apprehension, malaise and lost vitality. That this mood was not confined to Wells we have already seen in works like Gissing's *The Nether World* and Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*; [...] We know too, that these feelings were not confined to literature. Historians have claimed that a phenomenon like jingoism, for all its bluster, is an expression of anxiety and tension, and we have already considered the early twentieth-century panics and war-scares, strikes and suffragette violence. Most disturbing, perhaps, of all, was the feeling that all these external events had their origin deep within man himself: one remembers the famous and *Strange Case Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886)⁷³⁹

⁷³⁶Ibid., pp. 458-59.

⁷³⁷Ibid., p. 474-75.

⁷³⁸...*Life is nearly extinct in the small planet now. I am on my own in the barren and infinite space. Even the air has become exhausted... I am suffocating*, *Elza pilóta* (1982), p. 657.

⁷³⁹J. A. V. Chapple, *Documentary and Imaginative Literature 1880-1920* (London: Blandford, 1970),

5.4.6.2 Novels of conflict and civilisation

The War in the Air, *The World Set Free*, and *The Shape of Things to Come* all contain the above mentioned Wellsian features. They are about nationalism, war, pointless destruction, science and cosmopolitanism and thus share the preoccupations of Babits's *Elza pilóta*. *The World Set Free* and especially *The Shape of Things to Come* are more historical and essayistic than novel-like. In this respect, they differ from *Elza pilóta*. What these three novels, as opposed to the previously mentioned other three, have most principally in common with Babits's *Elza pilóta* is that war as a theme is not part of another story but, as in *Elza pilóta*, is depicted as a historical problem and a reality. All the above three works by H. G. Wells, and Babits's novel describe either national or international wars. The cause of the war is always nationalism. Science becomes a power by which humanity can destroy itself in all these books as well. The destruction of New York in *The War in the Air* is described as:

She was the first of the great cities of the scientific Age to suffer by the enormous powers and grotesque limitations of aerial warfare. She was wrecked as in the previous century endless barbaric cities had been bombarded [...] He directed the air-fleet to move in column over the route of thoroughfare, dropping bombs the *Vaterland* leading. And so our Bert Smallways became the participant in one of the most cold-blooded slaughters in the world's history, in which men who were neither excited nor, except for the remotest chance of a bullet, in any danger poured death and destruction upon homes and crowds below.⁷⁴⁰

The cause of the war is unintelligible:

"But why didn't they end the War?"

"It didn't ought to've begun," said old Tom.

"He said it simply—somebody somewhere ought to have stopped something, but who or how or why were all beyond his ken."⁷⁴¹

pp. 278-79.

⁷⁴⁰H. G. Wells, *The War in the Air and Particularly how Mr. Bert Smallways Fared while it Lasted* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1908), pp. 206-07.

⁷⁴¹*Ibid.*, p. 389.

Like Babits in *Elza pilóta*, H. G. Wells writes about the destructive power of science⁷⁴² in war especially in *The World Set Free*. This is meant to alarm readers about what it can do:

these atomic bombs which science burst upon the world that night were strange even to the men who used them.⁷⁴³ [...] For the whole world was flaring then into a monstrous phase of destruction. Power after power about the armed globe sought to anticipate attack by aggression. They went to war in a delirium of panic, in order to use their bombs first.⁷⁴⁴

The use of gas and the depiction of aggression and hatred in war are, again, alike in *The Shape of Things to Come*, and in *Elza pilóta*. H. G. Wells writes:

Other war poisons followed upon this invention, still more deadly: merciful poisons that killed instantly, and cruel and creeping poisons that implacably rotted the brain. [...] And to assist these chemicals in their task of what Dr Woker calls 'mass murder' there was a collateral research into incendiary substances and high explosives to shatter and burn any gas-attack shelter to which a frightened crowd might resort.⁷⁴⁵

Babits's description is equally fantastically scientific but less theoretical than H. G.

Wells's. The statement he makes about the cruelty of modern warfare is, however, equally alarming:

A városokban folyvást működtek a láthatatlan fényű fényszórók; amint bejutottak egy ilyennek a sugárkévéjébe, a röplőgépről visszavert sugarak érzékeny készülékeket hoztak működésbe. Ezek automatikusan megszólaltatták a szirénákat. A szirénák visítottak, a gépmadár föl- és lecsapott a magasságokban, a bombavető egy különös szerkezettel pontosan irányítva ejtette le gázpalackjait. Különös elektromos örvényeket hoztak működésbe az elektromos kutyák elhárítására.⁷⁴⁶

⁷⁴²A definite root of this idea is the *vril* in Lord Lytton's *The Coming Race*. 'It can destroy like the flash of lightning; yet differently applied, it can replenish or invigorate life, heal, and preserve...', Berneri, *Journey through Utopia* (1987), p. 236. Lord Lytton's work is positive, however. He believes that civilised humanity will preserve itself by having a lethal weapon in hand. Lytton had roots in Bacon. He does not abolish private property. He deems that civilised nations can communicate for the sake of scientific progress and the way to achieve this is to make every nation civilised. He is especially H. G. Wells's predecessor in this positive belief. See *ibid.*, p. 242.

⁷⁴³H. G. Wells, *The World Set Free*, 2nd edn., ed. Ritchie Calder (London and Glasgow: Collins, 1956), p. 102.

⁷⁴⁴*Ibid.*, p. 131.

⁷⁴⁵H. G. Wells, *The Shape of Things to Come* (London; Vermont: J. M. Dent; Charles E. Tuttle, 1999), p. 160.

⁷⁴⁶The spotlights whose light was invisible did not cease work in the cities. The minute they got into the sphere of such a radar, the radii bouncing off the aeroplane turned on these sensitive equipments. These

Unlike in Babits's novel, the world, in these three Wells novels, does not become doomed to ultimate destruction: it becomes possible to save after the devastation of the most lethal phases of war. Nicholson summarises this in connection with *The War in the Air* and *The World Set Free*. *The War in the Air* and *The World Set Free* both detail how world government saves civilisation from breaking up—the solution is implied in the former books without being described.⁷⁴⁷ The new government in *The World Set Free* 'had to secure it universally from any fresh outbreak of atomic destruction, and they had to ensure a permanent and universal pacification'.⁷⁴⁸ The Brisago council states how welfare can be established both in the country and in the cities of a 'new' world republic in which people have become tamed by suffering.⁷⁴⁹

The Shape of Things to Come also discusses at length the details of what a world government could be like. Its ending gives a positive conclusion to the whole work:

When the existing governments and ruling theories of life, the decaying religious and decaying political forms of today, have sufficiently lost prestige through failure and catastrophe, then and then only will world-wide reconstruction be possible. And it must needs be the work, first of all, of an aggressive order of religiously devoted men and women who will try out and establish and impose a new pattern of living upon our race.⁷⁵⁰

A Modern Utopia, which I have already mentioned, also believes in the rational faculties of mankind. It allows a compromise between socialism and *laissez faire* capitalism. It demands the gradual education of man, and envisages a world-state.

To conclude one can maintain that Babits's dystopia also shows the necessity of a

automatically switched the sirens on. The sirens screeched; the plane lurched up and down in the heights. The bomber released its gas tanks which were set in the right direction by a strange high precision machinery. This set off special electric whirlpools to ward off the electric dogs', *Elza pilóta* (1982), pp. 651-52.

⁷⁴⁷Norman Nicholson, *H.G. Wells* (London: Arthur Barker, 1950).

⁷⁴⁸H. G. Wells, *The World Set Free* (1956), p. 190.

⁷⁴⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 190-95.

⁷⁵⁰H. G. Wells, *The Shape of Things to Come* (1999), p. 418.

peaceful attitude by illustrating the dreadful consequences of fighting wars.

5.4.6.3 A modern romance

The War of the Worlds is also like the other Wells novels and Babits's *Elza pilóta*. It is, nevertheless, a romance.

The War of the Worlds contains the themes of over-rationality, science, a Republic-based social hierarchy, and war as concrete and metaphorical subject matter. Unlike Babits's *Elza pilóta*, and like *The War in the Air*, *The World Set Free* and *The Shape of Things to Come*, this novel's story goes beyond the most horrible consequences of the war to have a happy ending. There are two ways in which this novel is turned into a romance, making it a metatext of all pessimistic utopias. One is that the Martians (cf. Houyhnhnms) who represent the over-rational, hierarchical, inimical force become destroyed by an unknown type of bacillus. Thus life can continue in London after the devastation of the war. In all senses of the term, and as opposed to either E. A. Poe's, or *Elza pilóta*'s universe, life is made to overcome death:

But while that voice sounded the solitude, the desolation, had been endurable; by virtue of it London had still seemed alive, and the sense of life about me upheld me. Then suddenly a change of something—I knew not what—and then a stillness that could be felt. Nothing but this gaunt quiet.⁷⁵¹

The other is that, unlike the world of *Elza pilóta*, in which all affections and any source of romance is killed in the bud by circumstances and the implanted prejudices of the war, in the world of *The War of the Worlds*, everything becomes subordinated to a husband's reunification with his wife. As a consequence of their union, all unpleasantness and vice become subordinated to a romance. 'And strangest of all is to

⁷⁵¹H. G. Wells, *The War of the Worlds* (London; Vermont: J. M. Dent; Charles E. Tuttle, 2001), p. 159.

hold my wife's hand again, and to think that I have counted her, and that she counted me, among the dead'.⁷⁵²

6 Conclusion

According to his comment on his own novel, Babits did not class *Elza pilóta* as a utopia, because, as I have already shown, Babits thought that utopias in general prophesised, promised, and threatened. He did not think that *Elza pilóta* did any of these.

In the course of my discussion of particular utopias and the utopia genre in general, I have based my approach on the ancient interpretation of the word "utopia" which Babits did know and even cited in one instance. According to this definition, Babits's work is a utopia. Despite what Babits thought about it, it does alarmingly threaten, warn, and prophesise. It is, nonetheless, more like the dark and pessimistic utopias than the tale-like romance ones. In this sense, it can be regarded as a hypertext of Swift's, Edgar Allan Poe's, and a few of H.G. Wells's utopias. It is, however, also a metatext of Thomas More's, Francis Bacon's, and the majority of H. G. Wells's utopias.

As far as its narrative, the intricacies of its double narrative and its subchapters are concerned, Poe's works are one of its models, especially when one observes how the subject matter of the sub-story are connected with the scientific theme.

As I have previously mentioned, Babits strongly disagreed with Karinthy's view on H. G. Wells. He took H. G. Wells's works seriously, seeing them more than

⁷⁵²Ibid., p. 172.

just combinatorial exercises or games of fantasticality. Apart from his view on H. G. Wells's works, which I have already quoted, Babits praised H. G. Wells for his orientation toward the future.⁷⁵³ In his early essay, 'Erkölc és iskola' Babits referred to H. G. Wells as one of the most outstanding thinkers of his age. One of the main points Babits made in this essay in connection with Wells is that 'Az élet fejlődés, nem magunkért vagyunk, hanem gyermekeinkért, s egész jelenünk csekélység. *Births and growth*: ebben a két szóban benne van az emberiség minden fontos ügye'.⁷⁵⁴ *Elza pilóta* is also a manifestation of this spirit. Its bitter objectivity towards the reality makes the reader realise the importance of peace and education.

⁷⁵³ See footnote 726.

⁷⁵⁴ 'Life is development. We are not for ourselves but for our children, and our entire presence is insignificant. *Births and Growths*: these two words contain all the important affairs of mankind', *Esszék és Tanulmányok* (1978), i, p. 27.

Conclusion

My thesis aims at interpreting the English substance of Babits's fiction. In order to accomplish my project I have not only investigated Babits's cultural background but also his source material.

As I illustrate in the introduction, my project breaks new ground not only in international but also in Hungarian scholarship. No one has written a comprehensive book on Babits's novels, or done interpretative research into the English material in *A gólyakalifa*, *Kártyavár*, *Timár Virgil fia*, *Halálfiái* and *Elza pilóta*. Babits's fiction is still largely inaccessible to the English-speaking international world of scholarship.

My work is relevant for several reasons. The five novels with which my dissertation is concerned are significant because they are the products of thoughtful experimentation on Babits's part. Through them Babits aimed not only at invigorating Hungarian novel writing, but also at reforming people's social behaviour. Babits reasons with his readership by delineating positive and negative attitudes and their consequences. His works have both moral and emotional depth.

The English substance of Babits's prose is crucial to the understanding of his fiction. The reason why many Hungarians are unable to make sense of his prose works is that they do not have access to the English source material. The English roots of the five novels are deeply embedded in their story-lines and fictional frameworks. They are predominant over the Hungarian sources. It is vital to discover and to interpret them. They are the keys to the comprehension of these works.

The introduction of these novels to the English-speaking readership allows a wide international audience to become familiar with the contents of *A gólyakalifa*, *Kártyavár*, *Timár Virgil fia*, *Halálfiái* and *Elza pilóta*. The ingeniousness of Babits's fiction can fascinate scholars. The educated English-speaking readership will find a

unique utilisation of English (French, German, and classical) sources in these five novels. Babits's fiction will also acquaint the international readership with a more serious side of Hungarian literary culture than that which is generally known. Familiarity with this type of literature can trigger a deeper inter-cultural understanding.

Among the five novels, *A gólyakalifa* has the largest amount of secondary literature concerning its English sources. I investigated the root material mentioned in various articles so as to decide which sources are correct and which are not. Thus I found that the skeleton of *A gólyakalifa*'s story is closest to that of Poe's *William Wilson*. *A gólyakalifa* does not only reflect a mood which originates in Poe, but it also utilises *William Wilson*'s story. By interpreting one of Babits's relevant letters on his own work I also discovered that he had Poe's and Coleridge's lives in mind when he wrote this novel. My findings are that *A gólyakalifa* is an investigation into the vulnerability of an adolescent's creative mind. The workings of this mind are the central subject of this piece of writing. Babits also employed formal ideas from R. L. Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* in this work. *A gólyakalifa* follows Stevenson's work from the point of view of structuring particular themes. The comparative reading of an adult's psychology with that of an innocent creative adolescent reveals further aspects of *A gólyakalifa*. My investigation into Morton Prince's *The Dissociation of a Personality* illustrates the medical roots of *A gólyakalifa*'s theoretical basis. My analysis of this source provides a more thorough understanding of the psychological themes of this prose work.

There is little secondary literature on *Kártyavár*. This novel is surrounded by some misunderstanding. Its explicit English source material remains almost completely ignored by its critics. Only István Sőtér mentions Dickens, despite the fact

that even Babits acknowledged his debt to the great English novelist in connection with this novel. The Dickensian roots of *Kártyavár* are the key to this work. *Kártyavár*'s metaphorical structure is modelled on that of *Bleak House*. Its description of scenes and events closely follows the manner of *Bleak House* and *Hard Times*. The moral dilemmas of this novel are not only in tune with those of Dickens but also with those of nineteenth-century English philosophical thinking. They undoubtedly have strong roots in the writings of Carlyle, Emerson, Thackeray and J. S. Mill. The ending of this work is satirical. The closest precedent of its tone can be found in Carlyle's works. The alter ego's story, moreover, copies parts of *Oliver Twist*. It is revealing to see how Babits modifies the original story-line by using different artistic means. Dickens employs strong visual effects, whereas Babits relies more on comprehension through reason. The theory presented in Michael Riffaterre's *The Fictional Truth* enables the reader to understand the relevance of the alter ego's story which can be read as the subconscious reality of the main text. All in all, only by taking *Kártyavár*'s English roots into consideration, can the reader achieve a correct understanding of this novel.

The secondary literature on *Timár Virgil fia* is even more sparse. This is perhaps because of the general neglect of Babits's prose, since this novel is easily approachable. It has overwhelmingly dominant roots in Virgil. Its melancholy has traceable roots in English romantic verse. I investigated the Hungarian utilisations of *The Aeneid* in order to assess its role in Hungarian literary history. I have found that Hungarian literature has not seen many reworkings of this ancient Latin verse epic, especially after the eighteenth century. By rewriting Virgil's verse *Timár Virgil fia* has a greater affinity with English works than Hungarian ones. This theme has been truly popular in English literature, as I have shown in my work. *Timár Virgil fia*

becomes even more akin to English literature because of Babits's intermodal transformation of verses by English poets. An acquaintance with the English material of *Timár Virgil fia* provides a more complete understanding of this piece of writing.

Of all five novels *Halálfiái* has attracted the largest amount of secondary literature but its English sources are mentioned only in passing. *Halálfiái* receives more negative than positive criticism. The reason for this is that many critics do not comprehend its cultural coding, which has strong English roots. I find that it is misleading to interpret this novel in the light of French and German literary history. It is, however, helpful to read it as a Hungarian transformation of its English models. Babits not only utilised the structural devices of eighteenth-century English novels, but also metaphorical descriptions of emotional states as used by Meredith. *Halálfiái*'s preoccupation with morals, emotions and social obligations has its closest antecedents in nineteenth-century English novels. Having understood *Halálfiái*'s English material one can correctly read it as a colourful meditation on social behaviour. Its approach to its characters' conduct is truly fair. It is also much more optimistic than most critics believe it to be. Its negative stories emphasise the necessity of considerate social thinking even more strongly than its positive ones.

Elza pilóta was a popular novel at the time of its publication. I am mostly in agreement with the critics' interpretation of this novel although they often ignore the sources of this kind of fiction. *Elza pilóta* might be completely without precedent in Hungarian literary history, but it has many antecedents in the history of English fiction. It is an ingenious reworking of the structures and themes of particular English novels. Critics also seem not to have appreciated the nuances and depth of *Elza pilóta*. In my dissertation I draw attention to the subtle psychological descriptions in this work. These episodes concern themselves with complex emotional states and

their connection with moral feeling. I also discuss the role of science in this novel.

This remains unmentioned in Hungarian scholarship. All in all, I give an objectively appreciative interpretation of the outstandingly subtle thoughts that *Elza pilóta* represents.

I hope that my dissertation will trigger further interest in Babits's prose oeuvre. It undoubtedly makes further examination possible.

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Andrea Denby

The English and Classical Substance of Babits's Novels — Errata

This errata contains all errors I have found in my book, including minor spelling and grammatical errors.

Page 28: In line 20, 'like' should be used instead of 'such as'.

Page 52: In line 20, '*Swann's Way*' for '*Swan's Way*'.

Page 68: In line 2, 'Like' should be used instead of 'Such as'.

Page 72: In line 24, 'addressee' for 'adresse' in footnote 204.

Page 73: In line 8, 'affect' for 'effect'.

Page 79: In line 18, 'career' for 'carrier'.

Page 85: In line 18, 'The streets' for 'The street' in the translated quotation.

Page 103: In line 30, 'hands' for 'bands' in footnote 296.

Page 106: In line 7, 'like' should be used instead of 'such as'.

Page 111: In line 20, 'burial ground' for 'burial—ground'.

Page 117: In line 20, 'materials' for 'material'.

Page 137: In line 8, 'Corpora' for 'Copora' in the quotation.

Page 141: In line 22, 'Like' should be used instead of 'Such as'.

Page 151: In line 14, 'peace' for 'piece'.

Page 161: In line 14, 'Like' should be used instead of 'Such as'.

Page 177: In line 28, 'Is it not' for 'Is not it' in footnote 501.

Page 245: In line 11, 'Allan' for Alan.